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new left review

GENDER, RACE, DEMOCRACY

John Meiksins Wood Prospects of Emancipation

Barratt Brown Anderson and British Capitalism

Barbara Mackie Feminism in Japan

Roberto Schwarz Brazilian Culture

Immanuel Wallerstein The Making of the Bourgeoisie

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Tony Pinkney and Franco Moretti on Modernism

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The untimely death of Raymond Williams is a great blow to all of us at NLR. We shall publish an appreciation in our next issue.

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Debates about the agencies of social transformation have become increasingly prominent on the Left, at a time when many people are questioning the efficacy of class struggle as the moving force of human emancipation. But questions of agency cannot be dissociated from the objectives of emancipatory struggles, and the goal of socialism conceived as the abolition of class exploitation has tended to be pushed aside by other objectives: freedom from racial and gender oppression, peace, ecological health, and an all-encompassing democracy. In her Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, Ellen Meiksins Wood considers the prospects of achieving these goals where advanced capitalist social relations establish the context in which social struggles take place. Each specific oppression, she argues, has its own relation to capitalism which determines the conditions of emancipation and the agencies likely to bring it about. Wood points out, for example, that while the link between capitalism and class exploitation is necessary and constitutive, the manifest and important connections between capitalism and racial or gender oppression are historically contingent. She goes on to explore the social and historical pre-suppositions of a democratic order, looking at capitalist democracy against the background of pre-capitalist social formations, including classical Antiquity.

A major theme in Wood's analysis is the contradictory ways in which capitalism creates pressures against 'extra-economic' inequalities and at the same time makes use of whatever historic oppressions are available in any given national or cultural setting. Vera Mackie's informative discussion of Japanese feminism presents a striking case in point, a distinctive combination of a highly advanced capitalist economy with a cultural pattern of women's subordination reinforced by the imposition of the samurai form on family structures. This has produced a dominant ideology which has become particularly useful at a time when Japan is joining other capitalist countries in adopting standard right-wing economic policies. The mythology of the 'traditional' Japanese family now underwrites a privatized 'Japanese-style Welfare State', where the family, and specifically 'good wives and wise mothers', shoulder the burden of care for the aged and handicapped while men work longer hours than in any other developed country. The specific context of Japanese feminism has encouraged certain forms of activism

which, Mackie suggests, may hold important lessons for feminist movements elsewhere, in particular in its adoption of a strongly internationalist perspective.

In NLR 161, Perry Anderson re-examined the much debated 'Nairn-Anderson' theses originally outlined in the sixties to account for the pervasive crisis of British society during that decade. At a different crisis-ridden moment, the questions raised by that debate remain very much alive, and Anderson's explanation, modified and updated to encompass recent events and new historical data, will undoubtedly continue to serve as a major reference point in controversies about the new conjuncture and its political implications. In this issue, Michael Barratt Brown forcefully dissents both from Anderson's account of the historical facts and from its conceptual framework, casting doubt on the proposition that industrial capital in Britain has been subordinate to 'commercial' activity in a specifically English way. Today, concludes Barratt Brown, our focus should in any case shift away from the 'peculiarities' of English development to the global crisis of which Britain is a not atypical part.

The culture of Brazil, like that of other Latin American countries, is often characterized as imitative and inauthentic, in thrall to European and North American fashions. Roberto Schwarz here questions the premises of a cultural nationalism based on denunciations of 'cultural copying', in which abstract and ideological conceptions of imitation are detached from underlying historical imperatives and class relations.

Immanuel Wallerstein, in his entertaining Byrn History Lecture delivered at Vanderbilt University, considers the complexities and ambiguities in the problematic concept of the 'bourgeoisie', as it has passed from medieval burgherdom to modern capitalism and beyond.

Two more debates begun in earlier issues are here continued. Nicos Mouzelis defends Marxist theory against Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (who replied in number 166 to a criticism of their work by Norman Geras in 163), while maintaining that there remains in Marxist conceptions of politics a reductionism that still needs correction. Finally, we publish an exchange between Tony Pinkney and Franco Moretti, whose essay on modernist literature appeared in number 164.

Capitalism and Human Emancipation

Let me say something, first, about Isaac Deutscher, not just in some ritual tribute for the occasion but because it seems appropriate to what I am going to say in my lecture and the spirit in which I intend to say it.* I did not know Isaac Deutscher, but I have formed a pretty strong impression of the kind of man he was, and the kind of political voice he represented; and it seems to me precisely the kind of voice we need a lot of now. Like many others, I have been impressed in particular by the stability and balance of his commitment to socialism—and I say stability quite deliberately, to convey not a stubborn dogmatism but, on the contrary, the kind of balanced, independent and critical judgment which allowed him, for example, to praise without apology the achievements and promise of the October Revolution while never disguising the horrors of its deformations, at a time when so many others were swinging wildly between blind worship and abject recantation of socialism altogether. Or the stability which kept him working as a Marxist intellectual through periods of muted class struggle, while so many others gave up and went off in pursuit of various intellectual and political fashions.

I think this stability had something to do with Deutscher's measured vision of socialism, which recognized its promise for human emancipation without harbouring romantic illusions that it would cure all human ills, miraculously making people 'free', in Shelley's words, 'from guilt or pain'. He said once that socialism was not 'evolution's last and perfect product or the end of history, but in a sense only the beginning of history'.¹ It is just this kind of balanced judgment that we badly need today, and this means understanding not only the ways in which socialism is not the end of history, not the end of human emancipation, but also the ways in which it *is* the beginning. We also have to bring the same judgment to the means and agencies of socialist transformation as to its ends. Speaking to American students at the height of student activism in the 1960s, Deutscher delivered a not altogether welcome message: 'You are effervescently active on the margin of social life, and the workers are passive right at the core of it. That is the tragedy of our society. If you do not deal with this contrast, you will be defeated.'²

It seems to me that a similar contrast is our tragedy right now; and we have to face with the same balance the fact that there are strong and promising emancipatory impulses at work, but that they may not be active at the core of capitalist society and may not free us from its oppressions. We too have to deal with this contrast or be defeated.

These issues are very much alive, especially because it is no longer taken for granted on the Left that the decisive battle for human emancipation will take place on the 'economic' terrain, the home ground of class struggle. For a great many people, the emphasis has shifted to struggles for what I shall call *extra-economic* goods—gender-emancipation, racial equality, peace, ecological health, democratic citizenship. Every socialist ought to be committed to these goals in themselves—in fact, the socialist project of *class* emancipation always has been, or should have been, a means to the larger end of human emancipation. But these commitments do not settle crucial questions about agencies and modalities of struggle, and they certainly do not settle the question of class politics. A great deal still needs to be said about the conditions for the achievement of these extra-economic goods. In particular, if our starting point is *capitalism*, then we need to know exactly what kind of starting point this is. What limits are imposed, and what possibilities created, by the capitalist regime, by its material order and its configuration of social power? What kinds of oppression does capitalism require, and what kinds of emancipation can it tolerate? In particular, what use does capitalism have for extra-economic goods, what encouragement does it give and what resistance does it put up to their attainment? and so on. I want to make a start on answering these questions, and as the argument develops I shall try to throw them into relief by making some comparisons with pre-capitalist societies.

* This is the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, delivered on 23 November 1987, at the London School of Economics. Only footnotes have been added.

¹ Isaac Deutscher, 'On Socialist Man', in *Marxism, Wars and Revolutions: Essays from Four Decades*, Verso, London 1984, p. 272.

² Deutscher, 'Marxism and the New Left', in *Marxism in Our Time*, Jonathan Cape, London 1972, p. 74.

I. Capitalist Equality and Inequality

Let me begin by saying that certain extra-economic goods are simply not compatible with capitalism, and I do not intend to talk about them. I am certain, for example, that capitalism cannot deliver world peace. It seems to me axiomatic that the expansionary, competitive and exploitative logic of capitalist accumulation in the context of the nation-state system must, in the longer or shorter term, be destabilizing, and that capitalism—and at the moment its most aggressive and adventurist organizing force, the government of the United States—is and will for the foreseeable future remain the greatest threat to world peace. Nor do I think that capitalism can avoid ecological devastation. It may be able to accommodate some degree of ecological care, especially when the technology of environmental protection is itself profitably marketable. But the essential irrationality of the drive for capital accumulation, which subordinates everything to the requirements of the self-expansion of capital and so-called growth, is unavoidably hostile to ecological balance. It has to be added, though, that the issues of peace and ecology are not very well suited to generating strong anti-capitalist forces. In a sense, the problem is their very *universality*. They do not constitute social forces because they simply have no specific social identity—or at least they have none except at the point where they intersect with class relations, as in the case of ecological issues raised by the poisoning of workers in the workplace, or the tendency to concentrate pollution and waste in working-class neighbourhoods rather than in privileged suburbs. But in the final analysis, it is no more in the interests of the capitalist than of the worker to be wiped out by a nuclear bomb or dissolved in acid rain. You might as well say that given the dangers of capitalism, no rational person should support it, but things simply do not work that way.

The situation with race and gender is almost the reverse. Anti-racism and anti-sexism do have specific social identities, and they can generate strong social forces. But it is not so clear that racial or gender equality are antagonistic to capitalism, or that capitalism cannot tolerate them as it cannot deliver world peace or respect the environment. Each of these extra-economic goods, then, has its own specific relation to capitalism, and each requires careful examination. Since time is limited, however, I shall make some very general preliminary points about race and gender to illustrate the ambiguity of capitalism in these respects, and then concentrate on the question of democracy, though I shall have more to say about some aspects of gender oppression under that heading.

The first point about capitalism is that it is uniquely indifferent to the social identities of the people it exploits. This is a classic case of good news and bad news. First, the good news—more or less. Unlike previous modes of production, capitalist exploitation is not inextricably linked with extra-economic, juridical or political identities, inequalities or differences. The extraction of surplus value from wage-labourers takes place in a relationship between formally free and equal individuals and does not presuppose differences in juridical or political status. In fact, there is a positive tendency in capitalism to *undermine* such differences, and even to dilute identities like gender or race, as capital strives to

absorb people into the labour market and to reduce them to interchangeable units of labour abstracted from any specific identity. On the other hand, capitalism is very flexible in its ability to make use of, as well as to discard, particular social oppressions. Part of the bad news is that capitalism is likely to co-opt whatever extra-economic oppressions are historically and culturally available in any given setting. Such cultural legacies can, for example, promote the ideological hegemony of capitalism by disguising its inherent tendency to create under-classes. When the least privileged sectors of the working class coincide with extra-economic identities like gender or race, as they so often do, it may appear that the blame for the existence of these sectors lies with causes other than the necessary logic of the capitalist system. It is not, of course, a matter of some capitalist conspiracy to pull the wool over people's eyes. For one thing, racism and sexism function so well in capitalist society partly because they can actually work to the advantage of certain sectors of the working class in the competitive conditions of the labour market. The point, though, is that if capital derives advantages from racism or sexism, it is not because of any structural tendency in capitalism toward racial inequality or gender oppression, but on the contrary because they *disguise* the structural realities of the capitalist system and because they divide the working class. At any rate, capitalist exploitation can in principle be conducted without any consideration for colour, race, creed, gender, any dependence upon extra-economic inequality or difference; and more than that, the development of capitalism has created ideological pressures *against* such inequalities and differences to a degree with no precedent in pre-capitalist societies.

But we immediately come up against some contradictions. Let us consider the example of race. Despite the structural indifference of capitalism to extra-economic identities (or in some sense because of it), its history has been marked by probably the most virulent racisms ever known. The widespread and deep-rooted racism directed against blacks in the West, for example, is often attributed to the cultural legacy of colonialism and slavery which accompanied the expansion of capitalism. But on second thought, while this explanation is certainly convincing up to a point, by itself it is not enough. Take the extreme case of slavery. A comparison with the only other known historical examples of slavery on such a scale will illustrate that there is nothing automatic about the association of slavery with such virulent racism, and may suggest that there is something specific to capitalism in this ideological effect. Some people may be surprised to learn that in ancient Greece and Rome, despite the almost universal acceptance of slavery, the idea that slavery was justified by natural inequalities among human beings never caught on. The one notable exception, Aristotle's conception of natural slavery, never gained currency. The more common view seems to have been that slavery was a convention, though a universal one, which was justifiable simply on the grounds of its usefulness. In fact, it was even conceded that this useful institution was *contrary to nature*. Such a view appears not only in Greek philosophy but was even recognized in Roman law. It has even been suggested that slavery was the only case in Roman law where there was an acknowledged conflict

between the *ius gentium*, the conventional law of nations, and the *ius naturale*, the law of nature.³

The Justification of Slavery

This is significant not because it led to the abolition of slavery, which it certainly did not, nor does it in any way soften the horrors of ancient slavery. It is worth noting because it suggests that, in contrast to modern slavery, there seemed to be no pressing need to find a justification for this evil institution in the natural inferiority of certain races. Now, ethnic conflicts are probably as old as civilization; and defences of slavery based, for example, on biblical stories about tainted inheritance have had a long history. But modern racism is something different, a more viciously systematic conception of inherent and *natural* inferiority, which took off in the late 17th or early 18th century and culminated in the 19th century when it acquired the pseudo-scientific reinforcement of *biological* theories of race, and continued to serve as an ideological support for colonial oppression even after the abolition of slavery.

One is tempted to ask, then, what it was about capitalism which created this ideological need, this need for what amounts to a theory of *natural*, not just conventional, slavery. And at least part of the answer must lie in a paradox. While colonial oppression and slavery were growing in the outposts of capitalism, the workforce at home was increasingly proletarianized; and the expansion of wage-labour, the contractual relation between formally free and equal individuals, carried with it an ideology of formal equality and freedom. In fact, this ideology, which on the juridical and political planes denies the fundamental inequality and unfreedom of the capitalist economic relation, has always been a vital element in the hegemony of capitalism. In a sense, then, it was precisely the structural pressure *against* extra-economic difference which made it necessary to justify slavery by excluding slaves from the human race, making them non-persons standing outside the normal universe of freedom and equality. It is perhaps because capitalism recognizes no extra-economic differences among human beings that people had to be rendered less than human in order to accommodate the slavery and colonialism which were so useful to capital at that historical moment. In Greece and Rome, it was enough to identify people as outsiders on the grounds that they were not *citizens*, or that they were not Greeks or Romans. In capitalism, the criterion for excommunication seems to be exclusion from the main body of the human race.

Or consider the case of gender oppression.⁴ The contradictions here are not quite so glaring. If capitalism has been associated with a racism more virulent than ever before, I for one would find wholly unconvincing any claim that capitalism has produced more extreme forms of gender

³ For example, the Roman jurist Florentinus wrote that 'Slavery is an institution of the *ius gentium* whereby someone is subject to the *dominium* of another, contrary to nature.' See M. I. Finley, 'Was Greek Civilization Based on Slave Labour?' and 'Between Slavery and Freedom', in *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, Chatto and Windus, London 1981, pp. 104, 113, 130.

⁴ The following two paragraphs, with some modifications, are based on a talk delivered at the Socialist Scholars Conference in April 1986, subsequently published in *Against the Current*.

oppression than existed in pre-capitalist societies. But here too there is a paradoxical combination of structural indifference to, indeed pressure against, this extra-economic inequality, and a kind of systemic opportunism which allows capitalism to make use of it. Typically, capitalism in advanced Western capitalist countries uses gender oppression in two kinds of ways: the first it shares with other extra-economic identities, like race or even age, and it is to some extent interchangeable with them as a means of constituting under-classes and providing ideological cover; the second use is specific to gender: it serves as a way of organizing social reproduction in what is thought (maybe incorrectly) to be the least expensive way.⁵ With the existing organization of gender relations, the costs to capital of reproducing labour-power can be kept down—or so it has generally been thought—by keeping the costs of child-bearing and child-rearing in the private sphere of the family. But we have to recognize that, from the point of view of capital, this particular social cost is no different from any other. From the point of view of capital, maternity leaves or day-care centres are not qualitatively different from, say, old-age pensions or unemployment insurance, in that they all involve an undesirable cost. Capital is in general hostile to any such costs—though it has never been able to survive without at least some of them; but the point is that in this respect it is no more incapable of tolerating gender equality than of accepting the National Health Service or social security.

Although capitalism can and does make ideological and economic use of gender oppression, then, this oppression has no privileged position in the structure of capitalism. Capitalism could survive the eradication of all oppressions specific to women as women—while it would not, by definition, survive the eradication of class exploitation. This does not mean that capitalism has made the liberation of women necessary or inevitable. But it does mean that there is no *specific* structural necessity for, nor even a strong systemic disposition to, gender oppression in capitalism. I shall have some things to say later about how capitalism differs in this respect from pre-capitalist societies.

I have cited these examples to illustrate two major points: that capitalism does have a structural tendency away from extra-economic inequalities, but that this is a two-edged sword. The strategic implications are that struggles conceived in purely extra-economic terms—as purely against racism or gender oppression, for example—are not in themselves fatally dangerous to capitalism, that they could succeed without dismantling the capitalist system, but that at the same time, they are probably unlikely to succeed if they remain detached from an anti-capitalist struggle.

II. The Question of Democracy

I want to turn now, at greater length, to another aspect of this ambiguity, the question of democracy in capitalism. There can be no doubt that capitalism has made possible an unprecedented extension of citizenship,

⁵ I have qualified this statement because I am told that there has been important recent work suggesting that state-funded child-care may be *less* expensive to capital, but I am not familiar with the arguments

and it has always been a central question for socialism what strategic importance should be attached to this fact. Almost from the beginning there has existed a socialist tradition which assumes that the formal juridical and political equality of capitalism, in combination with its economic inequality and unfreedom, will set up a dynamic contradiction, a motivating force for a socialist transformation. A basic premise of social democracy, for example, has been that the limited freedom and equality of capitalism will produce overpowering impulses toward complete emancipation. And there now exists a strong new tendency to think of the transition to socialism as simply an extension of citizenship rights, on much the same assumption, as *democracy* has become the catchword of various progressive struggles, the one unifying theme among the various emancipatory projects of the left. Now, I like the idea of regarding socialism as an expansion of democracy, as long as the object is to keep the socialist project firmly on a democratic course. But I am not at all impressed by the new theoretical trappings of the very old socialist illusion that the ideological impulses of capitalist freedom and equality have created irresistible pressures to transform society at every level. The effects of capitalist democracy have been much more ambiguous than that, and this conception of social transformation is just a sleight of hand which invites us to imagine a smooth transition from capitalist democracy to socialist democracy.

The first requirement here is to have no illusions about the meaning and effects of democracy in capitalism. Of course we have to be aware of the *limits* of capitalist democracy, the fact that even a democratic capitalist state will be constrained by the demands of capital accumulation, and the fact that liberal democracy leaves capitalist exploitation essentially intact. But more than that, we have to be conscious of the positive *damage* that capitalism has inflicted on democracy, at the very same moment that it has advanced its development.

Let us examine this contradictory unity of advance and retreat by means of a comparison with pre-capitalist societies—and here I am thinking of societies which have already become divided by class. I shall speak freely of ‘pre-capitalist’ societies as if this term did not cover a vast assortment of social and cultural forms, widely separated in time and space, because there are certain broad generalizations which can be made about them on the major points at issue. Above all, the key to the status of political rights is that in pre-capitalist societies, where peasants were the predominant exploited class, their exploitation typically took the form of extra-economic, political, juridical, military domination. That is, the principal forms of surplus extraction to which pre-capitalist peasants were subject—rent and tax—were achieved through various mechanisms of juridical and political dependence: debt-bondage, serfdom, tributary relations, *corvée* labour, etc. It is not difficult to see how this fact alone placed a tremendous premium on juridical privilege and political rights and imposed an absolute limit on their distribution. The medieval concept of lordship sums it up nicely. It is a concept which inseparably unites political and economic power; and this, of course, had implications for peasant resistance. For example, in the famous English peasant revolt in 1381, provoked by the attempt to impose a poll tax, the rebel leader Wat Tyler formulated peasant

grievances as a demand for the equal distribution of lordship among all men. And if you consider the nature of exploitation in this kind of society, it is not at all surprising that peasant resistance to economic exploitation should take the form of demanding a share in the privileged juridical and political status of their overlords.

For peasants, economic power against exploitation depended to a great extent on the scope of jurisdiction permitted to their own political community, the village, as against the powers of landlord and state. And by definition, any extension of the village community's jurisdiction encroached upon and circumscribed the landlord's powers of exploitation. Some powers, however, were more important than others. In contrast to capitalism, the pre-capitalist landlord or the surplus-extracting state did not depend on controlling the process of production as much as on coercive powers of surplus-extraction. The pre-capitalist peasant, who retained possession of the means of production, generally remained in control of production, both individually and collectively through his village community. It was a characteristic of feudalism, as of other pre-capitalist forms, that the act of appropriation was generally much more clearly separate from the process of production than it is in capitalism. The peasant produced, the landlord then extracted rent, or the state appropriated tax; or else the peasant produced one day on his own plot and for his own household needs, and on another day on the landlord's demesne, or in some kind of service for the state. So the appropriative powers of landlord or state could be preserved even with a considerable degree of independence for peasants in organizing production, as long as the jurisdiction of the peasant community did not cross the line to control of the juridical and political mechanisms of surplus-extraction.

Peasant communities have from time to time pressed hard against those barriers, achieving a substantial degree of independence in their local political institutions, setting up their own local magistrates in place of landlord representatives, imposing their own local charters, and so on. And to the extent that they have achieved this degree of *political* independence, they have also limited their *economic* exploitation. But there has generally remained one final and insurmountable barrier which has defeated attempts to overcome the subjection of the peasant, that is, the barrier between village and state. The village community has as it were remained outside the state, and subject to it, as something alien.⁶

The Athenian Breach

As far as I know, there is only one case in pre-capitalist history where that barrier was clearly breached, and that is Greek, or more specifically

⁶ On this point, see Teodor Shanin (recipient of the Deutscher prize for 1987), 'Peasantry as a Political Factor', and Eric Wolf, 'On Peasant Rebellions', in T. Shanin, ed. *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1971, especially pp. 244 and 272.

Athenian, democracy.⁷ I would argue that by far the most revolutionary aspect of ancient Athenian democracy was the unique, and never equalled, position of the peasant as *citizen*, and with it the position of the village in its relation to the state. In sharp contrast to other peasant societies, the village was the constituent unit of the Athenian state, through which the peasant became a citizen. This represented not just a constitutional innovation but a radical transformation of the peasantry, unrivalled in the ancient world, or indeed anywhere else at any time. If the peasant is, as Eric Wolf has said, a rural cultivator whose surpluses in the form of rent and tax are transferred to someone who 'exercises an effective superior power, or *domain*, over him',⁸ then what characterized the Athenian smallholder was an unprecedented—and later unequalled—independence from this kind of 'domain', and hence an unusual degree of freedom from rent and tax. The creation of the peasant-citizen meant the liberation of peasants from all forms of tributary relationship which had characterized the Greek peasantry before, and continued to characterize peasantries elsewhere.

The significance of Greek democracy can be measured against the standard of other advanced civilizations of the ancient world, in the Near East and Asia. For all the many differences among these other states, one common feature stands out: a sharp division between ruling and producing classes, and specifically agricultural producers. This division was embodied in an equally sharp dichotomy between village and state. The state itself tended to be organized as a primary appropriator of surplus labour, extracting surpluses from subject peasant villages not simply in the form of taxation for public purposes but as a mode of private appropriation, a kind of centralized rent for the benefit of those who possessed a piece of the state. Alternatively, private property and the rights to extract peasant surpluses were perquisites of office.

On a smaller scale, this same pattern seems to have existed in Bronze Age Greece before the advent of the *polis*. In fact, the surplus-appropriating state acting in what Robert Brenner has called 'class-like' ways, was probably more a rule than an exception in advanced pre-capitalist

⁷ This is a contentious point which is difficult to make clear in the limited space of this lecture. The well-known evils of Athenian democracy, the institution of slavery and the position of women, cannot help but overshadow any other, more attractive features, and it undoubtedly seems perverse to argue, as I do, that an essential characteristic of Athenian democracy, indeed perhaps its most distinctive one, was the extent to which it excluded dependence from the sphere of production—that is, the extent to which the material base of Athenian society was free and independent labour. I shall ask for a suspension of disbelief here, and refer readers to other writings in which I make these arguments at greater length—in particular, my forthcoming book, *Peasant-Citizen and Slave: The Foundations of Athenian Democracy*, to be published by Verso in Spring 1988. I am not asking people to discount the importance of slavery or the status of women, but for the moment simply to consider the unique position of the Athenian peasantry. For this purpose, all that one needs to know about my argument on slavery is that slave labour remained relatively unimportant in agriculture in this still agrarian society, and that the bulk of agricultural production was performed by independent small producers. (I should probably emphasize here that Athens was not the proto-bourgeois trading nation that used to figure in some Marxist—but not only Marxist—accounts, and which still apparently persists in conventional wisdom.) Whatever else we may say about Athenian democracy, the position of its peasant producers, and also its artisans and craftsmen, must remain a central and distinctive feature.

⁸ Eric Wolf, *Peasants*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1966, pp. 9–10.

societies.⁹ We cannot understand, say, French absolutism without recognizing the role of the state as a means of appropriation, with its vast apparatus of lucrative offices and its extraction of taxes from the peasantry as a form of private property, a resource for those who possessed a piece of it. For that matter, we cannot understand an upheaval like the French Revolution without recognizing that a major issue in it was access to this lucrative resource.¹⁰

I can sum up the almost universal principle which Greek democracy challenged by reading you this passage from an old Chinese text by Mencius—a passage which, by the way, could with certain modifications have been written by Plato: 'Why then should you think . . . that someone who is carrying on the government of a kingdom has time also to till the soil? The truth is, that some kinds of business are proper to the great and others to the small. Even supposing each man could unite in himself all the various kinds of skill required in every craft, if he had to make for himself everything that he used, this would merely lead to everyone being completely prostrate with fatigue. True indeed is the saying, "Some work with their minds, others with their bodies. Those who work with their minds rule, while those who work with their bodies are ruled. Those who are ruled produce food; those who rule are fed." That this is right is universally recognized everywhere under Heaven.'¹¹ Well, almost everywhere under Heaven, but not in Athens. And it is no accident that when conservative, anti-democratic Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle depicted their ideal states, they very consciously and explicitly reinstated the principle of division between rulers and producers, a principle whose violation they clearly regarded as essential to Athenian democracy.

I have gone through all this to emphasize one fundamental point. In pre-capitalist societies, extra-economic powers, political authority and juridical privilege had a special importance because the economic power of appropriation was inseparable from them. One might speak here of a scarcity of extra-economic goods because they were too valuable to be widely distributed. We might, then, characterize the situation of extra-economic goods in *capitalism* by saying that it has overcome that scarcity. It has made possible a far wider distribution of extra-economic goods, and specifically the goods associated with citizenship, than was ever possible before. *But*—and here comes the bad news—it has overcome the scarcity of extra-economic goods by diminishing their value.

⁹ Robert Brenner (recipient of the Deutscher Prize for 1985), 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe', in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 55–57. This article in general, and its companion-piece in the same volume, 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism,' represent what I consider to be the best available discussion of 'extra-economic' exploitation and its implications.

¹⁰ On this point, see the ground-breaking study by George Comninel, *Reinventing the French Revolution: Marxism and the Revisionist Challenge*, Verso, London 1987, especially pp. 196–203.

¹¹ Mencius, in Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, Doubleday Anchor, Garden City, n.d., p. 140.

The Devaluation of Citizenship

Let us then look at this essential characteristic of capitalism, its devaluation of democratic citizenship. One way of formulating the argument is to say that capitalism has made possible the wide distribution of political goods because of its characteristic separation of the economic and the political. We have heard a lot about the separation of the economic and the political in capitalism.¹² I do not intend to go over that well-worn ground again, but I do want to explore its implications for the question at hand. I shall just briefly outline those aspects of that separation which are most relevant here. First, there is, of course, the fact that the so-called 'economy' acquires a life and laws of its own in the form of the market, as production in general becomes production for exchange and, more particularly, as labour-power becomes a commodity. Second, the power of appropriation is no longer directly associated with the possession of extra-economic power, political authority or juridical privilege. This does not mean that capitalist exploitation can do without the coercive force of the state to sustain it; but the capitalist does not acquire the power to exploit by directly wielding the sword or by possessing a piece of the state. Equally significant is the fact that the power of appropriation becomes entirely separate from the performance of public functions, juridical, political, religious or military. Just think, for example, of the contrast between the capitalist class and pre-capitalist aristocrats, who were typically soldiers, judges, even priests. For the ancient Homeric lord, as for the feudal aristocracy, appropriation was inseparable from such extra-economic functions, as it was in cases where the exploiting class was directly organized as an appropriating state, or where the right to property was a perquisite of public office.

What does all this mean for the status of extra-economic goods in the capitalist system? The first and most obvious point is that since capitalist appropriation, unlike pre-capitalist exploitation, does not depend directly on the exercise of juridical privilege and political power, the extension of juridical and political rights does not represent the same danger to the capitalist as, say, to the feudal lord. At any rate, in capitalism there exists a separate purely 'political' sphere, distinct from the 'economy', and this makes possible for the first time a 'democracy' which is just 'political', without the economic and social implications attached, for instance, to ancient Greek democracy, with its clear connotation of direct popular power or rule by the poor. The new democracy has certainly meant great advances in representative institutions, civil liberties, and so on, but it has not redistributed social power as ancient democracy transformed relations between appropriators and producers.¹³

The new conception of democracy has also had curious ideological

¹² I have discussed this question at greater length in 'The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,' *NLR* 127, May-June 1981, pp. 66-95.

¹³ The development of civil liberties—which represent a significant advance over ancient democracy and still contain an important lesson for socialist democracy—has been especially significant. But this should perhaps be regarded less as an advance in *democracy* than in 'liberalism'—that is to say, less as progress in the disalienation of power than in the control of alienated power, as I have argued in *The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism*, Verso, London 1986, pp. 154-166.

effects. On the one hand, it is often said that the contrast between civil equality and socio-economic inequality makes the latter more visible and less acceptable; but it is at least equally true that the formal equality of liberal democracy has the effect of legitimating class inequalities by denying their existence. It is perhaps not too surprising that democracy has ceased to be the unequivocally dirty word it always was for the dominant classes until quite late in the modern world. It has even become possible to use the concept of democracy *against* the direct exercise of popular power—as for example when the extra-parliamentary actions of the NUM are denounced as ‘undemocratic’. The very idea of democracy has been *debased*.

This is not to say that the new democracy has had no value, or that capitalists could accept it without resistance or qualm. Far from it, as Thatcherite Britain and Reaganite America have reason to know. At the same time, the fact remains that capitalism has allowed a distribution of political rights—to the extent, for example, of universal adult suffrage—much wider than has ever taken place before, and that it has allowed this redistribution of political wealth in large part by devaluing the currency. Here, in fact, is the ultimate limit of the emancipation which capitalism can tolerate. It must confine democracy to an impoverished extra-economic domain, or, when it needs an expanded extra-economic sphere, as it did under Fascism, it must altogether jettison democracy.

To put the point differently, the separation of the political and the economic in capitalism means the separation of communal life from the organization of production, and political life from the organization of exploitation. At the same time, capitalism also brings production and appropriation together in an inseparable unity. The act of appropriation in capitalism, the extraction of surplus value, cannot be separated from the process of production; and both these processes have been detached from the political sphere and, you might say, privatized. All this has implications for the conditions of resistance and struggle. There is, for example, no parallel in capitalism to the function of the village commune as a mode of peasant class organization in the struggle against lordly exploitation, that is, a mode of class organization which is inseparably economic and political at the same time. In capitalism, a lot can happen in politics and community organization at every level without fundamentally affecting the exploitative powers of capital or fundamentally changing the decisive balance of social power. Struggles in these arenas remain vitally important, but they have to be organized and conducted in the full recognition that capitalism has a remarkable capacity to distance democratic politics from the decisive centres of social power and to insulate the power of appropriation and exploitation from democratic struggles.

III. The Position of Women

Now, what I have said about the devaluation of political rights applies, of course, to everyone, men and women alike; but it has some interesting consequences for women in particular, or rather for gender relations, which go well beyond the purely political question. First, there is the

obvious fact that women under capitalism have achieved political rights undreamed of in earlier societies; and I think it is safe to say that the general tendency toward at least formal equality has created pressures in favour of women's emancipation with no historical precedent. Partly, this development can be put down to the general devaluation of political goods which has made it possible for dominant groups to be less discriminating about their distribution. But in this case, there is much more at stake than the formal rights of citizenship.

Let us return to our pre-capitalist examples. We have focused our attention on the typical combination of peasant-production and extra-economic exploitation. Now we can consider what this meant for the position of women. Here it is important to keep in mind that where peasants have been the primary producers and sources of surplus, as they generally have been in pre-capitalist societies, it is not just the peasant himself but the peasant *household* that has constituted the basic unit of production as well as—and I want to stress this point—the basic unit of exploitation. The labour appropriated by landlords and states from the peasantry has been family labour, and it has taken the form not only of productive rent- or tax-producing services performed collectively by the peasant family, or other kinds of labour services both private and public, but also domestic labour in the master's household and, of course, the reproduction of the labour-force itself, the bearing and rearing of children who will become the labourers, servants and even soldiers in the households, fields, and sometimes the armies of the dominant classes. The division of labour within the peasant family, then, has been deeply and unavoidably linked to the demands placed upon the household unit by its role in the process of exploitation. Whatever may have been the historical reasons for particular sexual divisions of labour, they have always been distorted by the hierarchical and coercive character of antagonistic production relations.

It is particularly important to remember that pre-capitalist peasants generally kept control over the production process, while landlords increased their surpluses not so much by directing production as by employing and enhancing their powers of surplus-extraction, that is to say, their jurisdictional, political and military powers. We have already talked about the significance of this fact for the distribution of political rights, but it also had its implications for gender relations in the peasant household. The critical point can be summed up by saying that wherever there is exploitation there has to be hierarchy and coercive discipline, and that in this case they are concentrated in the household and become inseparable from the day-to-day relations of the family. There can be no clear separation here between family relationships and the organization of the workplace of the kind which has developed under capitalism.

In other words, it has been said that the peasant's 'dilemma' is that he is both an economic agent and the head of a household, and the peasant unit is 'both an economic unit and a home'. On the one hand, the household must meet its own demands as a unit of consumption and as a set of affective relationships, and also the demands of the peasant community of which it is a part; on the other hand, from the point of view of the exploiter, the peasant household is, as Eric Wolf has put

it, 'a source of labour and goods with which to increase his fund of power'.¹⁴ One consequence of this contradictory unity seems to be that the household reproduces the hierarchical and coercive relations between exploiter and exploited. As the organizer of production, the head of the household in a sense acts as the *agent* of his own *exploiter*.

Now, you could say that there is no absolute necessity for that hierarchical structure to take the form of male dominance, though it has generally, if not universally, done so. But apart from any other factors that may encourage this particular form of hierarchy—such as differences in physical strength, or the reproductive functions that occupy the woman's time—there is a disposition to male dominance inherent in the relation between the pre-capitalist peasant household and the world of landlords and the state. Again, that relation is inseparably economic and political at the same time. Since the exploitative powers confronting the peasant household are typically 'extra-economic'—that is, juridical, political and military—they are inescapably linked to the one social function which has been most universally a male monopoly, armed violence. In other words, the organization of society in general, and specifically the nature of the ruling class, places a special premium on male domination. The power and prestige attached to the male role in the society at large and in the dominant ideology of the ruling class have typically had the effect of reinforcing the authority of the male both in political and ceremonial functions within the peasant community and inside the household. If inside the household the head is the agent of landlord and state, outside it he is also the household's political representative, in the encounter with the male-dominated extra-economic powers of landlords and state. Thus the extra-economic, political-coercive character of pre-capitalist exploitation tends to reinforce any other dispositions to male-dominance within the peasant-household.

Incidentally, one significant test of these propositions might be to imagine a dependent family of producers in which the male has no such political role outside the household, or where the surrounding social relations are not of this extra-economic kind. The closest approximation I can think of is the slave family of the American South, a group of people completely deracinated, cut off from their communal roots, without juridical and political standing, and inserted into a capitalist economy. And it turns out that one of the distinctive characteristics of the American slave family, even in the midst of a society where male dominance remained very tenacious, was the unusual authority of the woman. It is something to think about.

At any rate, in capitalism the organization of production and exploitation is generally not so closely connected with the organization of the household, nor is the power of exploitation directly extra-economic, political or military. Although capitalism has an unprecedented drive for accumulation, it fills this need mainly by increasing labour-productivity rather than by means of directly coercive surplus-extraction. Of course the compulsion to maximize productivity and profitability, and the resulting antagonism of interest between capital and labour create a

¹⁴ Wolf, *Peasants*, pp. 12-17

need for a hierarchical and highly disciplined organization of production; but capitalism does not concentrate these antagonisms, this hierarchical and coercive organization, in the household. They have a separate locale in the workplace. And even where the home is more closely tied to the workplace, as, say, in the small family farm, the capitalist market creates relations of its own with the outside world which differ from and supersede the old relations with the peasant community and the political, juridical and military powers of pre-capitalist landlords and states. These new relations have typically had the effect of weakening patriarchal principles.

The major factors disposing, say, feudalism to male domination are missing here—that is, the unity between the organization of production and exploitation and the organization of the family, the extra-economic relation between exploiters and exploited, and so on. Where feudalism operated through a relation between lord or state and the *household*, mediated through the male, capital strives for direct and immediate relations with *individuals*, male or female, who from the point of view of capital take on the identity of abstract labour. Men who are interested in maintaining old patterns of male domination have been forced to defend them *against* the dissolving effects of capitalism—for instance, against the effects of increasing numbers of women leaving the household to enter the wage-labour force.

IV. Capitalism and the Extra-Economic Domain

We have talked about various consequences of capitalism's separation of economic exploitation from extra-economic power and identities. There remains something more to be said about its ideological effects. We are being told these days by 'post-Marxist' theorists not only that capitalist democracy has produced powerful ideological impulses toward every kind of freedom and equality, but also that the 'economy' has a limited importance in people's experience, that the autonomy of politics and the openness of social identities are the essence of our current situation in the capitalist West. Let us look at the features of capitalism to which these propositions apparently refer.

Paradoxically, yet again, the very features which have devalued extra-economic goods in capitalist societies have given the appearance of *enhancing* the domain of extra-economic goods and widening their scope. This appearance has been taken for reality by capitalist ideologues who assure us that liberal capitalism is the last word in freedom and democracy, and it now appears that people on the left are accepting it too. On the face of it, capitalism seems to leave very large free spaces outside the economy. Production is enclosed in specialized institutions, factories and offices. The working day is sharply marked off from non-working hours. Exploitation is not formally associated with juridical or political disabilities. There seems to be a wide range of social relations that lie outside the framework of production and exploitation and create a variety of social identities not immediately connected to the 'economy'. Social identities seem much more 'open' in this sense. So the separateness of the economy may appear to give a wider scope, a freer hand to the world outside it.

But in fact, the economy of capitalism has encroached upon and narrowed the extra-economic domain. Capital has gained private control over matters that were once in the public domain, while giving up social and political responsibilities to a formally separate state. Even all those areas of social life which lie outside the immediate spheres of production and appropriation, and outside the direct domination of the capitalist, are subjected to the tyranny of the market, what might be called the commodification of extra-economic goods. There is hardly an aspect of life in capitalist society that is not deeply determined by the logic of the market.

If politics in capitalism has a specific autonomy (relative or otherwise), there is an important sense in which that autonomy is weaker, not stronger, than the autonomy of pre-capitalist politics. Because the separation of the economic and the political has also meant the transfer of formerly political functions to the separated economic sphere, politics and the state are if anything more, rather than less, constrained by specifically economic imperatives and the demands of appropriating classes. Here we may recall our earlier examples of pre-capitalist states (including the classic case of 'Bonapartism') which were free from dominant classes to the extent that they were themselves 'class-like', competing with other class appropriators for the same peasant-produced surpluses.

It used to be a truism for the Left that social life in capitalism is uniquely subordinate to and shaped by the imperatives of the 'economy', but the latest trends in post-Marxist theory seem to have abandoned this simple insight. In fact, it is not too much to say that they have been taken in by the mystifying appearances of capitalism, by the one-sided illusion that capitalism has uniquely liberated and enriched the extra-economic sphere. But if the autonomy of politics, the openness of social identities, and the wide distribution of extra-economic goods are part of the truth, they are indeed only part of it, and a small and contradictory part at that.

It has to be said, however, that there is nothing surprising about the tendency to see only part of the picture. It is one of capitalism's most notable characteristics, this capacity to hide its face behind a mask of ideological mystifications. What is more surprising, when one comes to think of it, is that a convention has developed according to which capitalism is supposed to be unusually *transparent* in its relations of exploitation and domination. We are often told by social scientists that, unlike pre-capitalist modes of production, in capitalism relations of class are sharply delineated, no longer masked by non-economic categories like status-differences or other non-economic principles of stratification. Economic relations stand out in sharp relief, as the economy is no longer embedded in non-economic social relations. For the first time, they say, it has become possible to speak of *class* consciousness. Now, interestingly enough, even those who deny the importance of class in capitalist society may still subscribe to this view. They can agree about the distinctness of the economic sphere in capitalism and about the clarity of class as a distinctly economic category, and then they can go on to treat its separateness as an *isolation* and relegate it to an insular

periphery. They can say, for example, that while people may belong to classes, class identities are of marginal importance in the experience of human beings. People have other identities which have nothing to do with class and are equally or more determinative.

Again, there is a grain of truth in some of this, but again it is only part of a contradictory truth, so partial as to be a gross distortion. Of course people have social identities other than class, and of course these shape their experience in powerful ways. But this simple truism will not advance our understanding very far, and it certainly will not tell us much about how these identities should figure in the construction of a socialist politics, as long as we remain vague about what these identities mean, not only what they reveal about people's experience but also what they conceal. For one thing, far too little attention has been given to capitalism's unprecedented capacity to mask the realities of exploitation and class—or rather, there is a growing failure to acknowledge that this mask is precisely a mask. There has been a tendency to forget even Marx's most elementary insight about the obscurity of the relation between capital and labour in which the unpaid portion of labour is completely disguised. Capitalist exploitation, far from being more transparent than other forms, is more than any other masked. This is the most elemental false appearance at the heart of capitalist relations, but it is only one of many. There is also the familiar fetishism of commodities which gives relations among people the appearance of relations among things; there is the political mystification that civic equality means pluralism and that there is no dominant class in capitalism; and so on.

Mystifications of Class

All this is familiar enough, but it needs to be emphasized that capitalist exploitation and unfreedom are in many ways less, not more, transparent than pre-capitalist domination. The exploitation of the medieval peasant, for example, was made more rather than less visible by feudalism's juridical acknowledgment of his dependence. In contrast, the juridical equality, contractual freedom, and citizenship of the worker in a capitalist democracy are likely to obscure the underlying relations of economic inequality, unfreedom and exploitation. In other words, the very separation of the economic from the extra-economic which is supposed to unmask the realities of class in capitalism is what mystifies capitalist class relations. The effect of capitalism may be to deny the importance of class at the very moment, and by the same means, that it purifies class of extra-economic residues. If the effect of capitalism is to create a purely economic category of class, it also creates the appearance that class is *only* an economic category, and that there is a very large world beyond the 'economy' where the writ of class no longer runs. To treat this appearance as if it were the unmasked and ultimate reality is certainly no advance in the analysis of capitalism. It mistakes a problem for a solution, and an obstacle for an opportunity. It is less illuminating than the most uncritical pre-Marxist political economy; and to build a political strategy on a retention of this mystification instead of an effort to overcome it must surely be self-defeating.

What, then, does all this mean for extra-economic goods in capitalist society and in the socialist project? Let me sum up: Capitalism's structural indifference to the social identities of the people it exploits makes it uniquely capable of discarding extra-economic inequalities and oppressions. This means that while capitalism cannot guarantee emancipation from, say, gender or racial oppression, neither can the achievement of these emancipations guarantee the eradication of capitalism. At the same time, this same indifference to extra-economic identities makes capitalism particularly effective and flexible in using them as ideological cover. Where in pre-capitalist societies extra-economic identities were likely to highlight relations of exploitation, in capitalism they typically serve to obscure the principal mode of oppression specific to it. And while capitalism makes possible an unprecedented redistribution of extra-economic goods, it does so by devaluing them.

What about socialism then? Socialism may not by itself guarantee the full achievement of extra-economic goods. It may not by itself guarantee the destruction of historical and cultural patterns of women's oppression or racism. But it will do at least two important things in this regard, apart from abolishing those forms of oppression that men and women, blacks and whites, share as members of an exploited class. First, it will eliminate the ideological and economic needs which under capitalism can still be served by gender and racial oppressions. Socialism will be the first social form since the advent of class society whose reproduction as a social system is endangered rather than enhanced by relations and ideologies of domination and oppression. And second, it will permit the revaluation of extra-economic goods whose value has been debased by the capitalist economy. The democracy that socialism offers is one that is based on a reintegration of the 'economy' into the political life of the community, which begins with its subordination to the democratic self-determination of the producers themselves.

Several strategic points follow from this, which can be summed up very briefly. Socialists must support all emancipatory struggles which can be won within the boundaries of capitalism, but we also have to look beyond those boundaries. And our view will be obstructed if we accept the mystifications of capitalism, its illusions about the richness and autonomy of the extra-economic sphere, its false appearance of relegating class relations to a marginal and insulated economic realm, its attempt to pass a devalued political currency as the coinage of human emancipation.

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Away With All the Great Arches: Anderson's History of British Capitalism

The golden age of British History is now over, according to David Cannadine, not only as a nation but also as a subject of study—‘an account of the British past which reconciled repeated revolutions with a belief in ordered progress and which thus appeared to be simultaneously unique yet exemplary.’¹ The concern with change and progress is now out of fashion. Continuity is the last word. The elaboration of ‘great arches’² by the sociologists has replaced the economic historians’ search for discontinuities and their concern to explain them. If the interest in change exaggerated the discontinuities, the drawback of all great arches is that from such a great height only giants and mass movements are visible. They give us a wonderful panorama of the terrain, but fail to reveal what is happening in the groups down below and how they are regrouping within the great masses. Picking out the giants tells us little of the smaller men and women. Perry Anderson has always tended to take a synoptic view of great amplitude but little detail. In a series of articles twenty years ago—which Edward Thompson dubbed the ‘Peculiarities of

the English³—he and Tom Nairn had sought to establish that there was never a proper ruling industrial bourgeoisie in Britain.⁴ The manufacturers and mill-owners remained subordinate economically, politically and culturally to the aristocratic rulers of an earlier agrarian society. And this was the source of the malady of British capitalism today and equally of the failure of the British working class to challenge its masters for real power. What Anderson is now proposing is an even more radical argument—that there was no real hegemonic industrial bourgeoisie in Britain, for the very good reason that there was no real industrial revolution in Britain and British capitalism was rooted in commercial and not industrial capital accumulation.⁵

To substantiate this, Anderson draws heavily on the work of Geoffrey Ingham,⁶ which was already enthusiastically received by Colin Leys in an earlier NLR article.⁷ He cites the creation of a British overseas hegemony after 1689 (the framework of a commercial imperialism within which the industrial revolution took place); the survival of the great landowners right through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the emergence of a gentry and tenant agricultural economy in the eighteenth century; the defence of the gold standard in the 1820s confirmed by Peel's Bank Charter Acts of 1844–45; the decline of British industry after 1850 and the growth of commercial income from abroad in the 1850s and 1860s; the establishment of a dominant 'Treasury View' in the 1870s; the persistence of a gentry culture and consequent absence of state support for education, transport, communications or industrial restructuring in the 1880s; the failure of Chamberlain's Tariff Reform League in the 1900s; the growth of investment overseas rather than at home up to 1914; the return to gold in 1926 and the obsession of all post-Second World War governments with the defence of sterling at the expense of manufacturing industry. To this formidable indictment Anderson adds a further catalogue of crimes which he takes from Correlli Barnett's *Audit of War*:⁸ the failure of British industry to modernize in the 1930s, its dependence on US industrial aid in the War, the lack of any corporate strategy before or after Labour's victory at the polls in 1945, the profligacy of the welfare state and the lack of any trade union economic strategy right through to the 1970s. All this, Anderson opines, created the necessary conditions for Thatcher's total abandonment of British manufacturing industry in favour of the Big

¹ David Cannadine, 'British History, Past, Present and Future', *Past and Present*, August 1987, p. 175.

² The phrase comes from P. Corrigan and D. Sayer, *The Great Arch*, Oxford 1985. It has to be said that in this work the authors are more careful than those I am arguing with here to retain the dialectics within the continuity.

³ Edward Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English', *Socialist Register* 1965.

⁴ See especially Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review* 23, January–February 1964.

⁵ Perry Anderson, 'The Figures of Descent', *New Left Review* 161, January–February 1987. Anderson speaks of the 'slippage of modern scholarship' in abandoning the widely accepted Marxist view of the essentially industrial nature of British capitalism, but he believes that this follows from what he calls the 'glissade' in Marx's and Engels's own writings from their earlier certainties and draws on quotations taken from Harold Perkins, *The Structural Crowd: Essays in Social History*, Brighton 1981.

⁶ Geoffrey Ingham, *Capitalism Divided: The City and Industry in British Social Development*, London 1984.

⁷ Colin Leys, 'The Formation of British Capital', *New Left Review* 160, November–December 1986.

p. 114.

⁸ Correlli Barnett, *Audit of War*, London 1986.

Bang in the City—as he would expect from the whole history of a commercial and not industrial capitalism.

Britain's Industrial Development

History is more complex than what appears in the Olympian view from great arches. Closer to the ground we may find ups and downs in British history over three hundred years—periods of rapid industrial development at home, periods of expanding investment in production overseas, periods of great commercial activity; and corresponding to these, many twists and turns among the dominant fractions of an often divided ruling class. Sometimes Labour has succeeded in taking advantage of these divisions. Sometimes, as today, it has failed. The picture that Anderson, Leys and Ingham draw of a continuing City-Bank-Treasury nexus, with a hegemonic role in British capital, is fatally flawed. In a short article I can only give a few examples of factual errors and then concentrate on what, to my mind, are the rather large conceptual confusions. In doing this I shall defend a fairly traditional Marxist view, often shared by non-Marxists, of the origins of Britain's industrial revolution, of the economics of British imperialism and of what Ingham calls 'the constitutive class relations of the capitalist mode of production—that is to say, between productive capital and exploited labour'.⁹ The whole of this view is questioned by Ingham, and his doubts are strongly supported by Anderson and Leys.

At the outset this revision jettisons all Maurice Dobb's careful studies,¹⁰ which suggested that it was 'outsiders' like Edwin Sandys who, in the seventeenth century, challenged the great City merchants and went on to replace the old colonial trade with the triangle of British manufactures exported to Africa, for slaves to the Caribbean plantations, for sugar and tobacco on the final leg of the trip. Nothing, Dobb insisted, could be more obvious than that this involved the exploitation of wage labour by capital, although needing, as Marx put it, 'for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world'.¹¹

From the early eighteenth century British capital distinguished its overseas development from Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese predecessors and rivals by its participation in the ownership and management of estates, mines, plantations, forests, fisheries, railways, ports, shipping, rather than in purely commercial activities. Cromwell's Navigation Acts, together with the conquest of Jamaica, the exploitation of Northern Ireland, the reconstitution of the East India Company and the building of the Navy, had all, in Christopher Hill's phrase, 'removed the obstacles to the development of British capitalism'.¹² What Knowles first called

⁹ Ingham *op. cit.* p. 26. Ingham constantly refers to 'Marxist classics', 'theoretical Marxists', 'orthodox Marxists', 'cruder Marxist theories' etc., with which he takes issue, without ever citing chapter and verse of the authors and books in question.

¹⁰ M. H. Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, London 1946, pp. 193ff., and see M. Barratt Brown, *After Imperialism*, London 1963, pp. 31ff.

¹¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 31, Allen & Unwin 1946 edition, p. 783.

¹² Christopher Hill, *God's Englishmen*, Harmondsworth 1972, pp. 264-6.

'the new colonial empire' could then be established.¹³ British manufacturing industry and the industrial revolution emerged out of the application of capital to production in the West Midlands factories,¹⁴ in Bristol's shipbuilding,¹⁵ and in the plantations of the Caribbean.

This is the traditional view. But now Anderson insists on 'the framework of an English commercial imperialism' within which the industrial revolution proceeded.¹⁶ He enthusiastically quotes Colin Leys's assertion that 'British capitalist manufacturers never did compete successfully against other capitalist manufacturers. What they did was to overwhelm pre-capitalist production everywhere, and it was the comparative ease of this victory rather than the commitment of capital to particular sectors such as textiles or railways, or to particular forms of business organization characteristic of early capitalism, that led to later problems.'¹⁷ It is not made entirely clear why an easy victory should create problems later, but I would argue that the assertion is wrong in every particular.

The revolutionary industrial innovators in textiles and railway-building—Arkwright, Watt, Hargreaves, Boulton, Paul, Darby and Brindley in the eighteenth century, Brassey, Stevenson, Brunel, Wilkinson, Faraday in the nineteenth¹⁸—are reduced to some sort of commercial intermediaries or considered at best just lucky to have been first in the field. The one element of truth in Leys's account lies in the fact that pre-capitalist production the world over was overwhelmed by British capitalist manufacturers. But to underestimate the great textile mills of Lancashire, or the railway builders who established the rail networks not only of Britain and Europe but of North and South America, India and Africa and China, or the invention of the joint stock company, is to miss the point of how the world was overwhelmed.

The survival of a landowning class—both aristocrat and gentry—after the industrial revolution is, of course, a peculiarly British phenomenon, and I shall look at this later in its relation to the City, the Civil Service and the Empire. But Anderson, while he recognizes the peculiar nature of British agriculture with no peasant class and a large layer of tenant farmers responsible for the organization of capitalist production on the land, refers to it simply as the source of leisure which enabled the landowning gentry to indulge in political activity. The whole point about British agriculture was that it was capitalist and based directly on exploited labour.¹⁹ Moreover, it was from this large class of tenant farmers and lesser freeholders—a quarter of the total number of householders in Britain in 1688, according to Gregory King, and a fifth still

¹³ L. C. A. Knowles, *The Economic Development of the British Overseas Empire*, London 1928, Book 1 Part 1.

¹⁴ W. H. B. Court, *The Rise of the Midlands Industries, 1600-1838*, Cambridge 1953.

¹⁵ Henry Hamilton, *History of the Hamelands*, London 1947, pp. 447-52.

¹⁶ Anderson, 'Figures of Descent', p. 72.

¹⁷ Colin Leys, *Politics in Britain*, London 1983, p. 38, quoted in Anderson, p. 72fn.

¹⁸ Phyllis Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution*, Cambridge 1963.

¹⁹ Anderson, pp. 29-31.

in 1800 according to Colquhoun's estimates²⁰—that the new middle class emerged in the nineteenth century to challenge the gentry and aristocracy for power in the administration of affairs and in the management of industry.

Anderson also follows Ingham's view of the importance of Peel's Bank Charter Acts in laying the bases of Britain's commercial and banking dominance in the nineteenth century.²¹ Neither ever mentions the equally significant Company Acts of Peel's government, passed in 1844 and completed by Gladstone in 1856. These gave to the funds of private capital both the protection of limited liability and the privilege of corporate personality.²² This invention must surely rank with those of the industrial revolution. It certainly made possible the accumulation of capital, not only for investment in estate, railways and mines overseas, but in industry at home. The index of industrial output doubled between 1856 and 1874, while the export of goods rose more than twofold.²³ This was the heyday of the 'workshop of the world', as Anderson recognizes, but he accepts Ingham's contention that even in these years 'London's commercial and financial revenues alone—setting aside any investment income earned overseas—grew at a steadily faster rate than the export of manufactures.'²⁴ But this is simply not true, as we shall see. It is based on a misreading of 'commercial' revenue.

Anderson is much impressed by Ingham's quotations from W.D. Rubinstein's studies of nineteenth-century millionaires. It is certainly interesting that these were either landowners or financiers with very few industrialists in their number.²⁵ But while personal wealth and ownership of land undoubtedly carry great power, they do not tell us about the distribution of wealth in the whole country. Deane and Cole's figures show 38 per cent of national income derived from manufacturing and mining by 1871 in Britain; 22 per cent only from trade and transport.²⁶ The value of exports of goods in the 1850s was four times the value of financial services (excluding shipping) and three times this even by the 1900s. Property income from overseas added another third to the value of exports.²⁷ There have always been rich pickings in the City for a few, but the wealth of the nation has never depended on them.

The climacteric of Britain's world economic dominance has been variously dated, but Ingham's view, accepted by Leys and Anderson, is that decline was already evident in the middle of the nineteenth century. While industry and exports declined, Britain's commercial and banking

²⁰ Gregory King and Patrick Colquhoun's estimates for 1688 and 1800 are given in G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate, *The Common People, 1746-1946*, London 1949 ed., pp. 70-71.

²¹ Anderson, p. 39, and Ingham, pp. 102ff.

²² Tom Hadden, *Company Law and Capitalism*, London 1972, ch. 1.

²³ B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, pp. 271-2 and pp. 282-3.

²⁴ Anderson, p. 34 and Ingham, p. 97.

²⁵ W.D. Rubinstein, 'Wealth Elites and the Class Structure of Modern Britain', *Past and Present* 76, August 1977, quoted by Anderson, p. 35 and Ingham, pp. 30-32.

²⁶ P. Deane and W.A. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959*, Cambridge, Table 37, p. 166.

²⁷ A.H. Imhoff, *Economic Elements in the Pax Britannica*, Harvard 1958. Tables reproduced in Table One below.

strength grew, the pound sterling 'providing a trustworthy world currency and an efficient way of settling international accounts, insuring international trade, arranging international shipments, extending credit and the like'.²⁸ This is how Leys summarizes Ingham's theses about what 'capitalism requires of a world trading system'.²⁹ But what was the basis of the pound?

Anderson quotes Rubinstein in the same vein, describing 'England's role as the clearing house of the world preceding its emergence as workshop of the world' and 'even during the midday of Victorian prosperity predominating over it'.³⁰ Yet, on several occasions Ingham refers to the need for a strong national economy in order to manage the international economy and provide the world's money. He even sometimes recognizes that this depends on productive capital and exploited labour, though sometimes arguing otherwise.³¹ Ultimately, the fact is that the strength of British capital depended on its productivity. When this fell, all the City's horses and all the City's men could not put it together again, as Anderson sees perfectly clearly in predicting at the end of his article the demise also of United States dominance.³²

Indeed, contrary to Anderson's impression taken from the figures of M.W. Kirby's *Decline of British Economic Power Since 1870*,³³ British productivity held up remarkably well until the First World War. The Union Corporation figures for industrial production per head, based on 1850 = 100, reach 152 at 1870, 163 at 1880, 182 at 1890, 190 at 1900, 218 at 1913—a fairly continuous rise despite brief setbacks in 1878–79, in 1885–86 and in 1893–95 and 1901–04.³⁴ Deane and Cole estimate an average increase in productivity of over two per cent a year from 1861 to 1901—well above the 1.5 per cent of the first half of the century, although well below contemporary German and US rates.³⁵ It is easy to exaggerate the decline of British industry by pointing to the falling proportion of world trade enjoyed by British exports. Of course, as other countries developed their industry and trade, Britain's share of the total declined. British exports did stagnate between 1874 and 1899 but rose sharply up to 1913. (See Table One.) Nor is it entirely true that industrial rationalization through trusts 'remained absent from the British scene', as Anderson avers.³⁶ They were not perhaps comparable with US and German combines, but the consolidation in the 1880s of the Salt Union, the Alkali Trust, Brunner Mond, J. & P. Coats, or of Lever Bros. and Vickers, and the tobacco and cement company amalgamations cannot just be ignored.³⁷

²⁸ Leys, 'Formation of British Capital', p. 114

²⁹ Ingham, pp. 101ff

³⁰ Rubinstein, *Wealth Elites* ... quoted in Anderson, p. 35.

³¹ Ingham, pp. 17, 124–5 and 203

³² Anderson, pp. 76–77

³³ M.W. Kirby, *The Decline of British Economic Power since 1870*, London 1981, pp. 2–3 quoted in Anderson, p. 42

³⁴ E.C.A. Mission, *Economic Development in the UK*, Chart no. 8, p. 56.

³⁵ Deane and Cole, op. cit., Table 73, p. 283

³⁶ Anderson, p. 42.

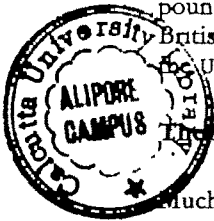
³⁷ Sir John Clapham, *Economic History of Modern Britain*, Cambridge 1936, vol. 3, ch. 4.

Table One: UK Balance of Payments, 1841-1913 (in £million)

Average for five years:	Imports	Exports	Re-exports	Deficit	Shipping	Balances on account of:		
						Business Services	Tourism etc.	Interest & Dividend
1815-20	-60	40	11	-9	10	9	-3	2
1821-25	-53	37	8	-8	9	7	-2	4
1826-30	-55	36	7	-13	8	7	-3	5
1831-35	-61	40	8	-13	9	8	-3	5
1836-40	-83	50	9	-24	11	11	-4	8
1841-45	-80	52	9	-19	12	11	-4	7
1846-50	-98	61	11	-26	14	13	-6	9
1851-55	-133	84	16	-33	19	18	-8	12
1856-60	-183	124	25	-34	26	24	-7	16
1861-65	-248	142	46	-60	34	33	-8	22
1866-70	-293	181	47	-65	44	40	-9	31
1871-75	-360	238	58	-64	51	49	-12	50
1876-80	-382	201	57	-124	54	47	-9	56
1881-85	-399	247	63	-99	60	47	-11	65
1886-90	-390	239	62	-89	57	46	-11	84
1891-95	-418	223	61	-134	57	45	-10	94
1896-1900	-474	254	61	-159	62	47	-11	100
1901-05	-542	294	70	-178	71	54	-13	113
1906-10	-630	396	90	-144	89	67	-18	151
1911-13	-728	481	105	-142	100	80	-22	188
Growth:								
1810s-1870s	× 7	× 6	× 8	-	× 6	× 7	-	× 12
1870s-1911-13	× 2	× 2	× 2	-	× 2	× 1.5	-	× 3.5

Source: A.H. Imlah, *Pax Britannica*, Tables 4, 13, 14, 20-21. *Notes:* (1) Exports include a small figure for bullion and specie and ship sales. (2) Business services include foreign trade and services and insurance. (3) Tourism includes a small figure for emigrants' remittances.

The whole of Ingham's argument is predicated in any case on the assumption that a strong pound is a guarantee of its successful role as a world currency. In fact, it is rather a *stable* currency that is needed. Richard Minns, from whom Ingham derived many of his insights, was always careful to warn that a 'high value for sterling associated with high interest rates can make it difficult for insurance companies and insurance brokers, as well as for industry, to sell their services or goods abroad.'³⁸ Although a stable pound was undoubtedly crucial for British economic dominance, it is absurd to suppose that a strong and stable currency could be assured without exports of goods and services balancing imports and without the direct exploitation of labour in British factories, mines and ships and in overseas mines, estates and transport systems. Ingham does in the end recognize this when he observes that Britain had the strongest economy and *thus* 'the "top currency" in the nineteenth century', and when he reveals that the pound could no longer play this role and was replaced by the dollar as British industry and overseas investment were overtaken by those of the USA, just as the dollar seems set to be replaced by the Yen.³⁹



The Definition of Commerce

Much of the difficulty that one is bound to have with Ingham's thesis arises from a peculiarly ambiguous definition of commercial activity—which includes banking and insurance and merchanting, but, apparently, also brewing and shipping and sometimes even all forms of overseas investment.⁴⁰ This enables Anderson and Ingham to use the figures in Imlah's *Pax Britannica* as evidence that such 'commercial' activity was 'the most important element in Britain's business wealth structure during the nineteenth century'.⁴¹ Ingham further insists that the 'role of capital exports for the City and the British economy has been overstressed at the expense of the impact of the actual commercial and banking services. The relative contribution of the City's overseas *earnings* and the rentiers' *income* from investments bear this out . . . It was only during the Edwardian period before 1914 that the latter exceeded the former, and even then not by a very large margin.'⁴² Anderson seizes on Ingham's next sentences and develops them in his own words: 'At best the City's export of capital—some of it in reality re-export—helped finance foreign imports of British goods, mainly in the underdeveloped world, while invisible earnings covered the trade deficit. The latter was the more important function and threw into sharp relief the relations between industrial and commercial capital in Victorian England.'⁴³

Since this is the heart of the Ingham thesis, the original statistical basis in Imlah's *Pax Britannica*—which Ingham uses but fails to put in his index—must be carefully consulted. (See the extracts from it in Table One.) For the thesis can be justified only by including shipping revenues

³⁸ Richard Minns, 'Financial Capital in Britain', *Capital and Class* 14, Summer 1981, p. 107.

³⁹ Ingham, pp. 17, 124-5 and 207.

⁴⁰ Ingham pp. 5-7 and Anderson, pp. 34-5.

⁴¹ Ingham, p. 31, quoting Rubenstein, op. cit., p. 103.

⁴² Ingham, p. 97.

⁴³ Anderson, p. 34.

with financial services, and even then the value of these two as a proportion of exports amounts in the 1820s to around 42 per cent and in the 1870s to around 45 per cent, not respectively 30 per cent and 50 per cent as Anderson states.⁴⁴ The one item in the balance of payments which did rise faster than the others, both before and after 1870, was the rentier income from overseas investment which Ingham says is 'overstressed'.

Anderson, like Rubinstein and Ingham, includes brewing and shipping in the definition of 'commercial' activity,⁴⁵ which then supposedly provided the greater part of Britain's national wealth and foreign earnings, and involved the major interest of the landowning and financial oligarchy. But this kind of *petitio principii* simply will not do. Brewing is presumably there because the Cavendishes married into the Burton family, the Guinnesses were in banking and brewing, and Quakers like Truman, Hanbury and Buxton, the Tukes and Barclays also combined both activities. But the Quaker banking families—Barclays, Lloyds, National Provincial—were all in industry before they were in banking. Shipping evidently appears under commerce because it is concerned with foreign trade; but it is not a financial service, and the direct exploitation of labour by capital could hardly be more apparent than in this industry. Finally, the assumption that overseas investment was limited to finance of governments cannot be reconciled with the overwhelming proportion invested in railways, mines, plantations, docks and other infrastructural activities, often with government guarantees, but in private undertakings, generally by very large companies.⁴⁶ By 1913, according to a Chatham House study in 1937,⁴⁷ Britain's total accumulated overseas investment was made up as follows: Government stock, 30 per cent (21 per cent in the Empire); railways, 41 per cent (12 per cent in the Empire); public utilities, 5 per cent; commerce and industry, 6 per cent; mines and other raw materials, 10 per cent; banks and finance, 8 per cent.

It is true that throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, the City maintained an overriding interest in overseas investment. But Anderson's claim that 'after 1870 capital exports regularly surpassed capital formation at home'⁴⁸ goes too far. Overseas investment boomed in the 1870s and between 1905 and 1914, but so did home investment. In the 1890s both were at a low level. In the late 1870s and in the decade between 1895 and 1904 home investment was again at a high level (between 5 per cent and 8 per cent of GNP), while foreign investment was low (between 2 per cent and 3 per cent).⁴⁹ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s foreign investment was never over 1 per cent of GNP, but home investment ranged between 5 per cent and 7 per cent. After the 1950s investment at home rose steadily

⁴⁴ Ibid. For corrected figures see Table One below.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ M. Barratt Brown, *Economics of Imperialism*, Harmondsworth 1974, chapters 5 & 6.

⁴⁷ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Problem of International Investments*, Oxford 1937, pp. 153–4, quoted as Table VII in Barratt Brown, *After Imperialism*.

⁴⁸ Anderson, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Barratt Brown, *After Imperialism*, Table IV, p. 109, taken from Charles Feinstein, *National Income, Expenditure and Output of the United Kingdom, 1855–1965*, Cambridge 1972, Tables 15 and 39.

to reach 20 per cent of GNP in 1980. Since then it has declined slightly, while foreign investment has risen to 9 per cent of GNP.⁵⁰ This is hardly a story of continuing neglect, although the Thatcher years have been marked by a sharp switch overseas. It is much more a story of ups and downs, of swings of capital between the attractions of investment in safe government stock at home and in somewhat riskier but more rewarding ventures overseas and increasingly after 1880 at home.

British Capitalism and the British Empire

Once we clear up the confusion about what can properly be called commercial activity, we can sort out Anderson's concept of an English 'commercial imperialism'. Ingham, wishing to distance himself from 'the cruder Marxist theories of imperialism', sees the actions of the British state in the colonial empire as 'necessary to preserve . . . the conditions of existence of a rational form of international commercial and banking capitalism'.⁵¹ Yet, unless 'commercial' is to be given a meaning quite different from Ingham's or even normal usage, this description of British imperialism is quite simply a nonsense. To believe that British capital had basically a banking and merchanting role in the Empire would require us to suppose that there had been in the Empire no sugar and cotton plantations, no tea and rubber estates, no gold, silver, copper and tin mines, no Lever Brothers, no oil companies, no Chartered Company, no Dalgery, no British-owned railways and other utilities or mills and factories overseas.

The most blatant misconception concerns the role played by India. Ingham criticizes Fieldhouse for failing to understand the economic importance of India, but sees India as the source of a trade surplus to supplement a declining British surplus, required to sustain the role of sterling as a world currency.⁵² This becomes for Anderson the basis of something he calls 'transaction profits on international trade', 'the City's commercial and financial earnings which were the real prize of the *fin-de-siècle* economy'.⁵³ What does all this mean when translated into real sources of income? The Indian surplus was transferred into investment elsewhere, as I have shown at length in *Economics of Imperialism*.⁵⁴ Again, earnings of merchanting were never as important as the earnings either on exports of goods or on direct exports of capital. A small part of the exports consisted of re-exports—goods imported into London's bonded warehouses for sale in the City's commodity markets and re-export—and these might be said to be subject to 'transaction profits'. But the value of these was never more than a fifth of the value of exports. (See Table One).

This whole nonsense about a commercial empire is tied to the argument, taken from Schumpeter (though Anderson refers to him only to criticize

⁵⁰ *National Income and Expenditure Accounts*, HMSO, Tables 10 1, 13 1 and 1.1

⁵¹ Ingham, p. 123. Cf. Leya, 'Formation of British Capital', pp. 114 and 117 and Anderson, p. 33

⁵² Ingham, pp. 123–5.

⁵³ Anderson, pp. 42, 43.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 190–7

his belief in the landowners as a military class⁵⁵), that the aristocracy and the financial oligarchy built the empire. Anderson accepts Ingham's argument that up to 1851 'the prevailing view was against the formal annexation of territory.'⁵⁶ This development, he says, was a later sign of weakening economic power that had to be buttressed by political power. Yet there are two great facts that cannot be reconciled with such a view. First, the Caribbean empire, based on the slave trade and plantations, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be described as a merchanting clearing house. Ironically, what is true is that it was often from the younger sons of gentry and even aristocratic families that the planters of the West Indies and of India, and later the farmers of East Africa, were drawn. It is only necessary to read Kathleen Stahl to realize that the wealth of the great City families was based not on commercial activity but, on the contrary, purely on production from British-owned and managed estates in the Colonies.⁵⁷ The peerages of Hailsham, Lyle, Campbell or Parker came to them in the twentieth century, but their wealth derived from the management of estates and shipping. P.J. Cain and A.L. Hopkins have recently shown that 'gentlemanly capitalism' was deeply and directly involved from the start in British expansion overseas, in production and not just in commerce, although they insist on distinguishing them from the industrial interest.⁵⁸

The second great fact is that, contrary to the views equally of Lenin and of Gallaher, Robinson and Fieldhouse, now repeated by Ingham and Anderson, most of the British Empire had already been established by 1850—not only in Canada, and the Caribbean, Madras, Bombay and the Cape Coast from the seventeenth century, but in Gibraltar, Bengal, Ceylon, the Cape, Botany Bay, Penang, Guiana and Trinidad by the end of the eighteenth; and to these were added by 1850 virtually the whole of India, plus Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Natal. Further increments, then, were almost entirely on the African continent, including Egypt, but also Palestine.⁵⁹ The pressures of British industrial capitalism behind this expansion can hardly be denied and, as we have already argued, the distinction in Britain between an exporting interest in textiles, iron and steel and an importing interest in sugar, cotton, tea and minerals, cannot be properly transformed into a distinction between industry and commerce without erasing from the record the ownership and management by British capitalists of the mines, plantations and shipping. Importing from overseas merchants might well have been described as commerce, but importing from British mines and plantations in British ships certainly cannot.

There was one moment that gives credence to the Ingham thesis. This is the defeat of Chamberlain's campaign for Tariff Reform—an issue on which it appears that industrial capital should have won and was vanquished. The campaign had the leadership of a charismatic Midlands

⁵⁵ J.A. Schumpeter, *Sociology of Imperialism*, 1919, Meridian Books, 1955. The reference by Anderson (p. 316n) is to Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London 1943, pp. 136–7.

⁵⁶ Ingham, p. 117.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Stahl, *The Metropolitan Organisation of Britain's Colonial Trade*, London 1937.

⁵⁸ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas', *Economic History Review*, November 1986 and February 1987.

⁵⁹ *Economics of Imperialism*, Tables 4 and 16, pp. 110, 187 and pp. 173ff.

industrialist, who could have had any post he wished in Salisbury's 1895 government and chose the Colonial Secretaryship, which he held until 1903. It had the intellectual resources of W.A.S. Hewins at the London School of Economics. It had the support of the Pearson press. Yet, after three years Chamberlain had failed to win the Conservative Party, which was then overwhelmed by the Liberals in the 1906 election fighting on an uncompromisingly free-trade platform.⁶⁰

Anderson takes this into account but gives as the explanation for Chamberlain's defeat the high cost of food from the Colonies that would have resulted from imperial preference.⁶¹ Grain from Canada and Australia was, in fact, cheaper than home-grown grains once the steamships replaced sail, and led to the ruin of British agriculture after 1870.⁶² The price of the equally cheap US grains would, of course, have been raised. To say that 'there was no rural electorate at home that could compensate for the urban unpopularity of increased food prices'⁶³ is to miss the point of Chamberlain's appeal for a tax that could be used to improve urban living conditions. It also comes oddly in the context of an argument that the power of the landed aristocracy and gentry was perpetuated throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Both would have been major beneficiaries of Chamberlain's tariff reform and were well represented in the persons of Walter Long and Henry Chaplin in his campaign.⁶⁴

It is true that the industrialists were divided, but not, as Anderson claims, because textiles, coal and shipbuilding were still sheltered from foreign competition. Exports of textiles did not, as he states, account for half of total exports, but only for a third, and only a fifth of manufacturing employment, and were not primarily directed towards the Indian market whereas iron and steel were.⁶⁵ The main division was between those industrialists, apart from the shipbuilders, who used iron and steel and were happy to obtain cheaper and better-quality steel from Germany or the USA, and those in the heavy industries whose products were being challenged in this way.⁶⁶ Ultimately, the main cause of Chamberlain's defeat, even before his illness, was the power of the City of London. But again one must insist that the City's interest cannot properly be described as 'global intermediation' or 'transaction profits on international trade', and 'commercial profits on all-purpose world trade',⁶⁷ whatever that may mean. The City was interested in investing funds all over the world and did not wish to be limited to the Empire, large as it was. There was never any question of the City being occupied mainly with commercial profits on trade in the goods of non-British producers, important though these may have been. The ultimate strength

⁶⁰ See my extended analysis of the Tariff Reform Campaign in *Economics of Imperialism*, pp. 160-170, based on examination of the Hewins papers.

⁶¹ Anderson, p. 44.

⁶² R.C.K. Enssor, *England, 1870-1914*, Oxford 1936, pp. 115-7.

⁶³ Anderson, p. 44.

⁶⁴ W.S. Adams, *Edwardian Heritage*, Muller, 1949 ch. 23.

⁶⁵ See *Economics of Imperialism*, Table 3, pp. 104-5, taken from B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of Historical Statistics*, Cambridge 1962, Overseas Trade tables, 4-12, pp. 283-326.

⁶⁶ Barnett Brown, *After Imperialism*, pp. 104ff.

⁶⁷ Anderson, pp. 43-4.

of British capital rested on its productivity at home and abroad. This was the City's dilemma: that the overseas role of the pound depended on the overall strength of the *British* economy. There is a clear vicious circle here—that the falling competitiveness of British industry after the 1860s, and again after the 1960s, was partly the result of increased overseas investment, but partly also was one of its causes, while capital was free to migrate to places where productivity and profits were higher.

When Ingham takes up Nairn's argument that the specific model of capitalism in Britain can still be a Marxist model, even if 'it cannot be explained wholly (or even mainly) in terms of the internal industrial economy and its relations of production (the class struggle)', he goes on to describe 'its particular external relations' as 'contingent'.⁶⁸ In the light of the massive range of studies of the integral structure of capitalism and empire, this is a claim of quite breathtaking insouciance. There is overwhelming evidence that empires after the seventeenth century were not commercial but based on direct exploitation of labour both overseas and at home.⁶⁹ They were no less dependent on state support.

The Nightwatchman State and an Unchanging 'Treasury View'

The myth of the nightwatchman state in Victorian England can never have been so unequivocally enunciated as it is in Anderson's article. Repeal of the Corn Laws is seen as the 'single outstanding deviation from the imperatives of *laissez-faire* . . . of less lasting importance than the return to gold and the reform of the Bank of England'. 'Factory Acts [were] carried by Tory Radicals, . . . the New Poor Law and Public Health Act [were] Benthamite.' 'There was nil growth in public expenditure between 1830 and 1850' and it went up 'a mere 20 per cent per capita over the next forty years'. Anderson sees in Britain a 'total absence of the state' in 'the development of the basic grid of physical communication', in conscripting an armed force or in the field of education, unlike the situation in its principal rivals.⁷⁰ One had supposed that this myth had been finally laid to rest by Robin Murray's exhaustive listing of the *res publica* which the capitalist state supplied in nineteenth-century Britain as elsewhere.⁷¹

We have already seen how Anderson follows Ingham in emphasizing Peel's Bank Charter Acts⁷² without mentioning the equally important Company Acts. There could scarcely be imagined a clearer example of an industrial bourgeois incumbent of high office than Sir Robert Peel, son of a Lancashire millowner and twice Prime Minister. While the *private* financing of the railways is particularly stressed by Anderson, the Railway Acts that permitted this are ignored. Nothing is said of the Enclosure Acts. Peel's first police force and the extension of the Royal

⁶⁸ Ingham, p. 26 and T. Nairn, 'Decline of the British State', *MLA*, February–April 1977, p. 12.

⁶⁹ *Economics of Imperialism*, *passim*.

⁷⁰ Anderson, pp. 36–7.

⁷¹ Robin Murray, *Multinational Corporations and National States*, Spokesman, 1971, pp. 64ff.

⁷² Anderson, p. 34 and Ingham, pp. 102ff.

Mail are forgotten.⁷³ The fact is that *laissez-faire* implied a powerful state framework within which capital could operate freely. State intervention in industrial affairs became necessary only in those countries which aspired to catch up, and the later their arrival on the scene the more direct the intervention that was required.⁷⁴

In the midst of his list of 'absences' of state involvement, Anderson does just register that the 'navy always had double the tonnage of any continental power.'⁷⁵ What sort of nightwatchman was this who prepared the ground for every single activity of the building's occupants and not only watched against unfriendly acts from outside but effectively ruled the seven seas and established colonial outposts in every continent? And what sort of nightwatchman was it who managed the supply of money always in such a way as to give advantage to commercial activity? Of course, if we recognize the much wider range of economic activities that Ingham and Anderson include in 'commerce'—trade in the goods produced by industry at home and British mines and plantations overseas and the investment that nourished them—then it can be seen that the nightwatchman's economic management was as widespread as his colonial empire. This is charmingly described by Ingham in the following terms: 'the capital export-induced demand for British manufactures created an unintended and indirect complementarity between the City and Industry.'⁷⁶ Some contingency!

An essential element in Ingham's City-Treasury-Bank nexus is the central place of the Treasury in the guise of the nightwatchman.⁷⁷ Its dominant position in the British Civil Service is traced back to Peel's Bank Act and the defeat of Attwood and the Birmingham School in the 1830s. Of course, it actually goes back much further, to the struggle of Parliament to control the King's expenditure and the emergence of the first Lord of the Treasury as Prime Minister in the first half of the eighteenth century. There evidently was a struggle in the 1820s and again in the 1860s between the manufacturing interest in Britain and the City of London, and Ingham has done well to draw our attention to it.⁷⁸ But his narrowing of the City interest to banking and commerce, as I am bound to keep repeating, serves only to conceal the ambivalence of British capital—which has continued right down to our own times—between its interest in developing the home market and in developing the market overseas. Huskisson is quoted by Ingham in a passage that shows how clearly he understood the dilemma. 'The gold standard was necessary for his grand strategy of British commercial superiority', says Ingham, but the proportion of the national income, says Huskisson, was 'less than it ought to be for the well-being of the labouring classes—the immediate instrument of production—or for the due maintenance and progressive growth of capitals by which their labour is called into active exertion.'⁷⁹ Ingham must, however, maintain his narrow

⁷³ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, London 1968, pp. 47, 64, 98

⁷⁴ A. Gerstenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge, Mass. 1961

⁷⁵ Anderson, p. 38

⁷⁶ Ingham, p. 142

⁷⁷ Anderson, pp. 36–38 and Ingham, pp. 128ff

⁷⁸ Ingham, pp. 108ff, 146ff

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 110

interpretation of 'commercial' to support his argument that British capital was mercantile rather than industrial. There can be no doubt that Huskisson was thinking about exports of *goods*, just as his successors in the argument during the 1860s were thinking about the investment of capital in overseas *production*.

The most tenuous part of the argument for an over-arching link between the 'Treasury view' and the City of London over two hundred years is that Gladstone *unintentionally* encouraged the City's external role by reducing Government borrowing and managing Government spending so prudently as to guarantee the sterling-gold standard. Gladstone's aim was precisely to free the government from City control; the effect of his policies, which became the 'Treasury view', was ironically to establish, as Ingham sees it, that nexus of interdependence between the City and the Treasury.⁸⁰ There is some truth in this, but the more important truth is missed by Ingham: the British capital investment that was encouraged overseas was not just in merchanting but in production, and, again, it was never wholly exclusive of investment at home. The important point is that British capital saw the whole world, not merely Britain or even the Empire, as its field of operation. It still does.

A nexus, moreover, cannot simply be assumed from what both Ingham and Anderson describe as an agreement not to intervene.⁸¹ Ingham's argument is that the Bank of England did intervene—to manage the gold-sterling exchange, which was of course supposed to be subject to a self-regulating mechanism. Each party to the nexus was supposed to be dependent on the actions of the other, which were determined not by consultation but by each leaving the others to follow mutually consistent policies—the government to establish vigorous controls over state spending, the Bank to manage the gold-sterling exchange, and the City to use its funds to invest overseas.⁸² There are two strange assumptions here, apart from Ingham's failure to allow that this investment was in *production*. The first is that none of the three parties knew what they were doing until clever fellows like Ingham and Anderson came along and showed us. The second is that the possibility, let alone the actuality, of conflicts between the parties did not arise. It is only argued that the industrialists always lost out in any disagreement because their power in Parliament was unable to challenge the power of the Treasury over governments.⁸³ There are, in fact, many suggestions of struggles and disagreements revealed in the works of Hilton and Roseveare which Ingham himself makes clear.⁸⁴

The Landed Aristocracy in the City and State

The primary element in Anderson's reform of British history is that there has been a three-hundred-year hegemony of a landed aristocracy

⁸⁰ *Ibid* p. 130.

⁸¹ Anderson, p. 71 and Ingham, pp. 128ff.

⁸² Ingham, pp. 130–1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁸⁴ B. Hilton, *Cash, Corn and Commerce*, Oxford 1977, p. 183; H. Roseveare, *The Treasury*, Allen Lane, 1969, pp. 186ff; Ingham, pp. 116, 130.

and gentry linked to a financial oligarchy, with a subordinate industrial bourgeoisie. In the development of capitalism elsewhere, an estate-owning class may have survived for a time but in the end succumbed to industrial capital.⁸⁵ Now, there is obviously no doubt that landed aristocrats did survive in British Cabinets throughout the nineteenth and even into the twentieth century, with a posthumous revival under Macmillan in the 1960s; nor that the aristocracy had an exclusive hold over foreign affairs. But Anderson's comment that this was 'scarcely a minor dimension of the political life of the largest Empire of the world' is misplaced.⁸⁶ The Empire, as I have argued, was an economic business, involving production as much as commerce.

Although the gentry and younger sons of the aristocracy were certainly involved in colonial ventures and in managing estates, the Empire seems to have been built by a peculiarly mixed assortment of explorers, adventurers, tricksters, black sheep with or without criminal records, as well as by missionaries and refugees from religious persecution like the Pilgrim Fathers.⁸⁷ Aristocrats were brought in, most notably after 1850, to provide the viceroys and governors. But, as an indication of the separation between foreign and colonial affairs, it is highly significant that, when the aristocrats were assembling a force for the Crimean War, they specifically excluded officers like Burton who, in the Indian Army, alone had actual experience of fighting since the Napoleonic Wars.⁸⁸ Disraeli did not disown his 'prancing pro-consuls' in India, but he scarcely encouraged them. Sir Charles Napier's famous telegraphic pun in Latin that 'I have Sind' (*peccavi*) shows that he had made this vast expansion of empire against London's authority.⁸⁹ The common interest of the men in the field and of capital at home was enough to protect the empire-building long before Salisbury presided over the partition of Africa as part of the European balance of power. Perhaps the most significant fact of all is that Joseph Chamberlain, the archetypal industrial bourgeois and radical leader of the conservative 'upstarts' who dominated British politics in the last decade of the nineteenth century, chose to be Colonial Secretary. He could have had any other office in Salisbury's Cabinet and 'was allowed usually the power of a co-premier and on some rare occasions more.'⁹⁰

The role of the aristocracy and gentry seems to be better founded in banking and commerce than in the empire. But most of the evidence really shows how far the bankers set themselves up as landed aristocrats.⁹¹ So did the industrialists, as Samuel Smiles was the first to note in his *Self-Help* and the *Lives of the Engineers*.⁹² The purchase of peerages

⁸⁵ Anderson, pp. 28–29.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 23.

⁸⁷ See for example, P. Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India*, Vol. 1, *The Founders*, London 1953, chs. 2 and 3 and pp. 152ff; Basil Davidson, *Story of Africa*, London 1984, pp. 180–1; J.F. Rippy, *British Imperialism in Latin America*, Minneapolis 1959, pp. 22, 32.

⁸⁸ *Economics of Imperialism*, pp. 106–7, quoting C. Hibbert, *The Destruction of Lord Raglan*, London 1961.

⁸⁹ E.L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815–1870*, Oxford 1938, pp. 404–5.

⁹⁰ J.L. Garvin, *Life of Chamberlain*, vol. 3 1934, quoted in R.C.K. Enssor, *England 1870–1914*, Oxford 1956, p. 224.

⁹¹ Marun Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980*, Cambridge 1981.

⁹² Samuel Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers*, London 1866, and *Self-Help*, London 1859.

has a long tradition in Britain, going back at least to Henry VIII and continuing into our own times. The alliance of the City and the aristocracy certainly seemed to reach its apogee in the reign of Edward VII.⁹³ But many of King Edward's friends in the City were parvenus, peers and baronets of his own creation—or of the last years of Victoria—Jews and others from continental banking houses like Cassel and Goschen, Isaacs (Reading), Montagu (Swaythling) and Samuel (Bearstead). By contrast, the Dukes of Abercorn and Fife, who married into the royal family, certainly fit into the category of landed aristocrats with City interests—both of them Scots.⁹⁴

To argue that these connections have continued ever since is once again to misread the antiquity of the titles held by peers on the boards of the City banks. I have shown elsewhere that of fifty peers or sons of peers on the boards of merchant banks in the 1930s, the 1950s and the 1960s, the peerages dating back beyond 1800 were no more than four and the nineteenth-century additions added only another seven. By 1980 peers or their sons were reduced to a mere 27 out of 190 top merchant bankers.⁹⁵ What Anderson called the aristocratic 'coloration' of the City had become much diluted.⁹⁶ The thrust of Anderson's argument is that landowning interest in the City tended to reduce and even to exclude the interest of industrial capital. Ingham's evidence, however, on which he heavily draws, is far from conclusive. Ingham certainly shows the well-known fact that British industry in the nineteenth century relied for its finance on ploughing back profits and on the provincial stock exchanges rather than the City of London. But by the early twentieth century this had changed. He himself states that 'between 1885 and 1907, the number of domestic companies on the London Stock Exchange grew from sixty to 569, but the provincial stock markets . . . were almost of greater importance.'⁹⁷ I have already shown that large mergers were financed during this period and that home investment was not by any means always neglected in favour of overseas activity.

The crux of Ingham's case is that the Treasury linked together the landowning interest and the financial oligarchy at the expense of industry. There is no doubt that Ingham's study has served to push back the emergence of a 'Treasury view' well into the first half of the nineteenth century, during Gladstone's long period of office as Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁹⁸ State parsimony was combined with intervention in the money markets to ensure the strength and stability of the pound sterling in its international rather than its domestic role. I have already suggested that there were ups and downs in the attractions of home and foreign investment, but what had this to do with the landowning interest? Agrarian incomes would have benefited from Chamberlain's proposed tax on imported food, and the gentry in the House of Commons recognized this and supported him. Was it just that landowners regarded

⁹³ W.S. Adams, *Edwardian Heritage*, ch. 1.

⁹⁴ *Whitakers Almanac*.

⁹⁵ M. Barratt Brown and N. Pearson, 'Who Runs British Industry'—a Northern College paper, 1981.

⁹⁶ Anderson/Neuen, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', op. cit., p. 15.

⁹⁷ Ingham, pp. 162–3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 150ff.

industrialists like Chamberlain and colonials like Rhodes as 'upstarts'?⁹⁹ Perhaps it was. By 1906 in any case they had been forced to accept them. Chamberlain had been defeated and had suffered his paralysing stroke, but the Conservative Party itself had been overwhelmed by a Liberal Party without the great landlords and with 29 Labour MPs. The argument is that the 'Treasury View' survived. What then were the origins and significance of the Treasury's preeminence?

Peter Gowan, in a fascinating recent article on 'The Origins of the Administrative Elite', would seem greatly to have strengthened the case for a continuing domination of British politics by a Treasury-Bank-City nexus.¹⁰⁰ Gowan's exposition of Gladstone's conversion to the concept of an elite and unified civil service selected by examination not by patronage and with promotion across departments as a counterweight to parliamentary democracy is wholly convincing. A unified civil service would inevitably be headed by the Treasury, because of the long history of struggle by the Commons to control the King's expenditure and the Prime Minister's position as First Lord of the Treasury.¹⁰¹ In fact the formal establishment of the Treasury's dominance did not take place until Lloyd George made his bargain with the Mandarins after World War One, when he dismissed all his wartime advisers—the 'garden cabinet'. The field was then closed for entry to all but established civil servants, so long as the Prime Minister was involved with the Treasury in all higher civil service appointments.¹⁰²

Nonetheless, Gowan's account does not completely support the Anderson-Ingham thesis, in two respects at least. The first is clearly stated by Gowan, when he writes that the 'Northcote-Trevelyan conception (that is, the reforms engineered by Gladstone for the civil service) was inimical to neither *laissez-faire* nor "collectivism"'. Benthamite policies were destroyed not because they were anti-*laissez-faire*, but because they were anti-elitist.¹⁰³ The second point concerns the precise nature of the elite. Gowan rightly assumes that Gladstone intended the elite to come from the landowning gentry via the institutions of the top public schools and Oxbridge.¹⁰⁴ He makes much of the involvement in the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms of Benjamin Jowett, whom Gladstone helped to become Master of Balliol. But there is a weakness in the argument here. Gowan assumes that Jowett's enthusiasm for a civil service at home and in India, drawn directly from Oxbridge, and not from candidates already established in employment, meant that Jowett went along with Gladstone in wishing to see this elite drawn solely or at least predominantly from the gentry. This cannot possibly be reconciled with Jowett's determination to open Oxford to the new middle classes and particularly to those who had been excluded by the Test

⁹⁹ Ensor, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-9

¹⁰⁰ P. Gowan, 'The Origins of the Administrative Elite', *NLR* 162, March-April 1987.

¹⁰¹ Henry Roseveare, *The Treasury*, Allen Lane, 1969

¹⁰² T. Balogh, 'The Apotheosis of the Bureaucrat', in H. Thomas, ed., *The Establishment*, Bloomsbury, 1959, pp. 23ff

¹⁰³ Gowan, p. 14

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20ff

Acts, on the ground that they were not Anglicans.¹⁰⁵ Gowan himself recognizes that 'the ~~new~~ middle classes were moving into public administration and local government and building their own prosperous new professions.'¹⁰⁶ I have already suggested that these middle classes came from the tenant farmers as much as from the poorer gentry, and my argument is supported by Cain and Hopkins whose so-called 'gentry' ends up as a middle class 'amalgam of rentier money, service employment and the remnants of landed society'. 'The new government of India,' these authors declare, 'provided the public school educated sons of the professional classes with their largest overseas outlet whether in the administration or the army.'¹⁰⁷

I have little doubt that the incorporation of the tenant farmers' sons into the governing elite was as important as their absorption in the management of industry. Their whole life experience was one of deference to the landowners, and this is a point of some importance for the Anderson-Ingham thesis. But it still suggests a major break in continuity, and one that must clearly be understood in relation to the type of education that was being offered at the public schools and Oxbridge in the middle of the nineteenth century. The schools, the philosophy and the educational system that Arnold inspired in the 1860s were designed precisely for the new middle classes and not chiefly for the gentry, while the great aristocrats were still generally educated privately.¹⁰⁸ Eton and Harrow, Winchester and Rugby followed by Oxbridge became routes to the top for a whole new class formation, which furnished in the second half of the nineteenth century the teachers in the schools and universities, preachers of all religions, doctors and dentists, architects and lawyers, journalists, writers and publishers, artists and musicians.¹⁰⁹ Their sons provided the recruiting ground for the growing civil service at home and throughout the empire, for local government and even for the armed services. It was a relatively small, mainly male elite, which mixed but uneasily with the even smaller elites of aristocrats and businessmen. By the 1930s it was supplying most of the members of the House of Commons and even of the cabinets, not just of Labour administrations, but of Tory and Liberal alike.

The Real Crisis in British Society

If the current peculiarity of the British state does not lie in its origins in a landed aristocracy and City plutocracy and their combined interest in international commerce, where does it lie? There is no doubt that in Britain the state has assumed fewer functions, except very markedly

¹⁰⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for Benjamin Jowett. It is ironic that it was not from Jowett, Professor of Greek at Oxford throughout the 1850s and 1860s, but from his opposite numbers in German universities, whose educational system is compared so favourably with Britain's by Anderson and Correll; Barnett, that the elevation of Greek civilization was engineered, and its roots in Egyptian (black) and Phoenician (semitic) culture disavowed. See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, Free Association Books, 1987, especially chapter 7.

¹⁰⁶ Gowan, p. 23. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁷ Cain/Hopkins, op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, London 1869, and see Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, London 1959, Part One, chapter 6.

¹⁰⁹ Ensor, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

in wartime, than in other developed capitalist economies, not to mention the socialist economies. The fact that Britain was the first country to carry through the process of industrialization forms an important part of the answer. This process could be initiated and extended throughout the world without in the first instance any competition from others. This is a point which, as we have seen, Leys makes with strong support from Anderson.¹¹⁰ But it is necessary to add that British industry was then sustained by its direct technical and financial assistance in the industrialization of other countries. The state, as we have seen, provided a legal framework at home and a military and naval framework overseas, while the City bankers operated a world currency. But none of this requires us to believe in some sort of exclusive alliance of City, Bank and Treasury. The state's administrators had no need to trouble themselves about the details of finance—that was left to the City—or about the technicalities of industry, which could be left to the businessmen. They had to be the facilitators, and for this role a special kind of education was evolved, based on study of the classics, not just languages but history, which encouraged good linguists and archaeologists and cultivated a style of English writing that reached its acme in the preparation of a good minute.

While the whole education and ethos of the Civil Service were based on the myth of *laissez-faire* and the nightwatchman state, civil servants at home and in the Empire were, in fact, required to ensure the provision of a range of economic functions for which they had no detailed technical training or experience, but which could be administered with intelligence and little or no expertise—the defence of property, the basic infrastructure of rail and roads, water, gas, electricity, drainage, education and training of labour, social services and pensions, overseas protection of British interests, colonial government and justice and some minimal orchestration of the economy through taxes and government spending. In the world of industry and finance beyond these, the normal Oxbridge degree in Classics or Modern Languages or Mathematics was of little help. Fortunately, the City asked only to be left alone, not only with a strong pound but with naval support to guarantee markets and protect investments. It was an easy ally, and this is the tiny kernel of truth at the heart of the Ingham-Anderson fruitage.

The gap that opened in British society with such disastrous results was thus not between industrial and financial capital but between, on the one hand, the practice of practical men in industry, technology and in banking and commerce, and on the other hand the philosophy of the academics in education, science and government. J.D. Bernal showed what it meant for British industry that 'the practical man was so contemptuous of theory, which covered all applications of science.'¹¹¹ The growing gap between government and industry was no less serious. Industrial organization, let alone reorganization, lay far outside the studies or experience of recruits to the Civil Service. Industrialists had to be brought in during two World Wars to manage these things and were soon expelled thereafter along with the controls they alone knew

¹¹⁰ Leys, *Politics in Britain*, p. 38, quoted by Anderson, 'Figures of Descent', p. 71.

¹¹¹ J.D. Bernal, *Science and Industry in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1953, pp. 166ff.

how to operate. Technical and scientific officers were either given a secondary role or set to general tasks where their intellectual resources were wasted.¹¹² Although the public schools and Oxbridge are today producing more scientists and technologists, and the Civil Service is opening its doors to students from other schools and universities, the cleavage that divides our society between those who give orders—whether industrialists, bankers or administrators—and those who take them is as deep as ever. The administrative grade of the Civil Service is still entered by a different door from that of the technical, executive or clerical grades and few pass across the grades. It is no different in industry. The English disease is class division. The only hope for ending it, except terminally, lies in exploiting the striations inside the ruling class itself.

Anderson's 'Seventy-Five Years of Decline'

I have not the space in this article to respond fully to the second half of Anderson's article, in which he traces the 'figures of Britain's descent' from the outbreak of the First World War. It will have to suffice here briefly to indicate some of the ups and downs and qualitative changes in class structure and in the distribution of income and opportunity that have occurred in this period. It is perhaps necessary to start by saying that in no country with a 'properly developed' industrial bourgeoisie has a 'properly developed' working class taken power and proceeded to build a socialist commonwealth. Anderson follows Leys and Ingham in accepting that in Britain in particular neither capital nor labour before or after the Second World War appeared to be capable of developing a corporate strategy that could have revived British industry to face its competitors and from which the industrial working class could have drawn the strength greatly to better its condition as it did in Scandinavia.¹¹³

This is far too sweeping an indictment. Baldwin, coming from the same Midlands industrial background as Joseph Chamberlain, not only introduced imperial preference in foreign trade but presided together with Neville Chamberlain (Joseph's son) over a decade of rising productivity in manufacturing industry and of investment in the new consumer goods industries around London. Electricity, air services, broadcasting, London's port and London transport were nationalized. Harold Macmillan proposed the nationalization of the banks, the railways and the coal mines and Sir Oswald Mosley an economic plan for Britain. For those in work the 1930s were a decade of prosperity.¹¹⁴

For the record of the war years Anderson and Leys both welcome with enthusiasm, as grist to their mill, the claims of Correlli Barnett in his *Arms of War*.¹¹⁵ The first of these is that British wartime production

¹¹² T. Balogh, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–128 and pp. 151–68. This publication also includes my list of the top four hundred controllers of British industry in 1937, one third of whom were found to have been at Eton.

¹¹³ Leys, 'The Formation of British Capital', p. 118 and Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ H. W. Arndt, *The Lassies of the 1930s*, Oxford 1944, chapter 4, D. H. Aldcroft and H. Richardson, *The British Economy, 1870–1939*, London 1969, Harold Macmillan, *The Middle Way*, London 1938.

¹¹⁵ Correlli Barnett, *Arms of War*, Leys 'Formation of British Capital', p. 118, Anderson, p. 476n.

survived only because of United States supplies, especially of machine tools. The work of Rutherford on the atom, Mitchell and Camm's design of the Spitfire and the Hurricane, Whittle's invention of the jet, Watson-Watt's radar, Baird's television, the achievement of Turing, Good and Michie in breaking the German codes and establishing the basis of computer technology or of the scientists round Mountbatten in planning the Normandy landings—all these are passed over.¹¹⁶

Secondly, Barnett argues that despite a stream of reports critical of Britain's industrial structure, the wartime Cabinet, and especially the Labour members, were totally pre-occupied with building a 'New Jerusalem' after the war, irrespective of resource costs and with a tripartite educational system that would relegate technical education to 'second-class studies for rude mechanicals'.¹¹⁷ Barnett is right to criticize here. But this is no argument for Anderson, Leys and Ingham. This wartime Cabinet was one in which industry was more strongly represented than at any other time and had an economic section inside the Treasury which was challenging the 'Treasury View' as never before, as well as industrialists heading up most of the supply departments. The Cabinet included Sir John Anderson from Vickers, Sir Andrew Duncan from the Iron and Steel Federation, Oliver Lyttelton from British Aluminium, Lord Leathers from William Cory, Lord Woolton from Lewis's; and even R.A. Butler, the architect of the Education Act, was married to a Courtauld.¹¹⁸

Anderson's incredible judgement of Labour's victory in 1945 as a 'historic windfall' results from his neglect of all those pressures for social reform and industrial reorganization during the 1930s that Paul Addison reveals in his *Road to 1945*—the Mond-Citrine talks, Bevin's support in the Macmillan Commission for a Keynesian public works programme, G.D.H. Cole's New Fabian Research Bureau Studies of industrial reorganization, the *Next Five Years Group* manifestos and reports.¹¹⁹ As a result, Anderson follows Leys and Barnett in seeing the reform of the budget and the construction of a system of social security, 'the two foundations of the post-war settlement', as the work of two Liberals—Keynes and Beveridge—'laid independently of Labour', when in fact Keynes and Beveridge were building on the basis of a mass of Labour reports in the 1930s.¹²⁰

The whole effort of Labour's post-war rule is characterized by Anderson as designed to restore and not to transform the 'historic structures of

¹¹⁶ Barnett pays tribute to this work, but is so concerned to demonstrate the failure of British industry to apply efficiently and on an adequate scale the work of the scientists, that British scientific achievements are made to appear to come out of an industrial vacuum. See especially Barnett, pp 166ff. And Barnett makes no mention of the wartime work on codes and computers at Bletchley Park. See Christopher Evans, *The Mighty Macs*, London 1979, pp 41-2, 171ff.

¹¹⁷ Barnett, p 301.

¹¹⁸ A.A. Rogow and Peter Shore, *The Labour Government and British Industry, 1945-51*, Oxford 1955, pp 62ff and Appendix, pp 189-90.

¹¹⁹ Anderson, p 54; Addison, op cit, pp 40ff, and Elizabeth Durbin, *New Jerusalem*, London 1985, whose careful study of Labour's pre-war economic planning is turned into a term of abuse by Barnett in chapter 12 of his *Age of War*.

¹²⁰ Anderson, p 53, and see Elizabeth Durbin, op cit.

Britain's imperial economy'.¹²¹ British industry's conversion to peacetime production and the success of the export drive in the years from 1946 to 1952 are neglected. Yet exports were more than doubled between 1947 and 1950, to cover 92 per cent of imports for the first time since early in the nineteenth century.¹²² Anderson says: 'There was neither overall planning nor state action to increase the volume of investment in British industry, which in key sectors fell behind pre-war levels.'¹²³ Cripps's planning certainly fell far short of 'overall', but investment at home was maintained at about 6 per cent of the National Product, which is what it had been in the years 1935-39.¹²⁴ Nearly half of the 6 per cent consisted of fixed capital formation in the newly nationalized industries. British capital in the 1930s had actually been disinvesting from overseas. Reinvestment overseas began in the late 1940s but at about one per cent of the National Product.¹²⁵ Industrial output at home grew rapidly, coal output from 184m. tons to 216m. tons and steel from 11.8m. tons to 16.2m. tons between 1945 and 1950, while overall industrial production per head was raised by 50 per cent. In vehicle manufacturing the increase in productivity from 1946 to 1950 was 67 per cent and in engineering and shipbuilding 34 per cent.¹²⁶

Anderson also maintains astonishingly that 'no major redistribution of income occurred' under the Labour Government.¹²⁷ Yet employee compensation was raised from 50 per cent of the National Product before tax (61 per cent after tax) in the 1930s to 68 per cent before tax (77 per cent after tax) in the years 1945-54—at the expense of income from self-employment and rent.¹²⁸ The top one per cent had their share of income reduced from 16 per cent before tax and 12 per cent after tax in 1938 to 11 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively in 1949 and to 9.3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively in 1954.¹²⁹ This was surely not a minor matter. The direction of the economy into rearmament in the Korean War of 1950 was certainly a disaster, but to refer to the 'loss of India' as if it were a misfortune which 'Labour was better situated than the traditional Conservative custodians of Empire to negotiate'¹³⁰ is to overlook entirely the strength of the demand inside the Labour Party for the ending of British colonial rule.

Anderson's critique of Labour's failure to correct the thirteen years of relative economic decline under the conservative Governments from 1951-1964 is much nearer the mark. Harold Wilson's 'white-hot scientific revolution' and George Brown's National Plan fizzled out in the years between 1964 and 1970. Planning Agreements and the Social

¹²¹ Anderson, p. 53.

¹²² London & Cambridge Economic Service, *The British Economy: Key Statistics, 1900-1970*, The Times Newspapers, 1971.

¹²³ Anderson, pp. 54-5.

¹²⁴ Barratt Brown, *After Imperialism*, Table Four, pp. 108-9.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ LCA Mission to the UK, *Economic Development in the UK, 1850-1950*, Tables 8, 9 and 10.

¹²⁷ Anderson, p. 54.

¹²⁸ Barratt Brown, 'Growth and Distribution of Income and Wealth', in K. Coates, ed., *What Went Wrong? Spokesman*, 1979, Table 15, pp. 60-61, based mainly on C.H. Feinstein, *The Distribution of National Income*, London 1968.

¹²⁹ Barratt Brown, *After Imperialism*, Table 22, p. 235.

¹³⁰ Anderson, p. 55.

Contract fared no better between 1974 and 1979, though rising oil prices provided a better excuse for inflation and a wage freeze.¹³¹ Public expenditure was raised sharply in 1975 to finance increased pensions and food subsidies and was thereafter held steady in real terms up to 1979, although the extra costs of rising unemployment meant that capital spending was cut. 1975 marked a peak in the share of the national product going to employee compensation—73.5 per cent, compared with 9.3 per cent to corporate profits and 7.4 per cent to rents.¹³² It is, moreover, wholly mistaken of Anderson to blame the unions for 'showing no interest in the planning powers' that could have regenerated industry.¹³³ The TUC *Economic Reviews* in 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978 all urged on the government the absolute necessity of an industrial strategy and measures to increase employment and the growth necessary to sustain wage increases. The 1976 *Review* spelled out in detail what such a strategy required of government, employers and trade unions, with a check-list for trade union representatives to follow up the progress of Planning agreements.¹³⁴

That all this ended in the 'winter of discontent', when the Callaghan government refused to raise public sector wages in line with those granted in private industry, should not lead us to assume that what happened had to be. It was in any case industry and not finance that was calling the tune. And, for the record, investment at home was raised in 1977 to an all-time high of 2.1 per cent of the National Product, with the overseas proportion at 2.5 per cent. It was only after 1979 that home investment was cut back and overseas investment increased, though it never rose to be more than half the home investment figure, and was not double, as Anderson claims.¹³⁵

For Anderson and Leys to criticize Labour government performance is one thing; it is quite another for them to accept Correlli Barnett's retrospective support for Thatcherism in laying the blame for British industry's failure to compete on Labour's obsession with the Welfare State and on the unions' hold on outdated restrictive practices.¹³⁶ The British malaise is not too much public spending; it is probably too little if comparison is made with the Scandinavian countries. To follow Thatcher in seeing welfare provisions only as an expenditure out of the resources of the nation, rather than as a contribution to them, should

¹³¹ Stuart Holland, 'New Public Enterprise and Economic Planning', in Ken Coates, ed., *How to Win*, Spokesman, 1981, pp. 111–46.

¹³² Barnett Brown, 'Growth and Distribution of Income and Wealth', Table 2, p. 57 and Table 15, pp. 60–61.

¹³³ Anderson, p. 55.

¹³⁴ TUC, *Economic Review 1976*, pp. 43–44.

¹³⁵ Barnett Brown, 'Growth and Distribution of Income and Wealth', Table 17 and *Economic Trends*, March 1987, Table 14. Anderson (p. 70) is quoting Leys, 'Thatcherism and British Manufacturing', *NIR* 151, May–June 1983, pp. 12–13, but Leys is claiming only that overseas investment was double the volume of *manufacturing* investment at home, and to compare this with all overseas investment is not comparing like with like.

¹³⁶ Leys, 'Formation of British Capital', p. 118, Anderson, p. 51, Correlli Barnett, p. 241, not 141 as Leys states. Barnett's intemperate language of course is not necessarily accepted by Leys and Anderson. Barnett's book ends with a last sentence dismissing 'the New Jerusalem itself as a dream turned to a dank reality of a segregated, subliterary, unskilled, unhealthy and institutionalized proletariat hanging on the nipple of state maternalism' (p. 304).

by now have been corrected by what we know of lost working time from ill-health and of the alienation of an unmotivated work force.¹³⁷ The real malaise has to be sought in the class structure and in the divisive educational system, which Mrs Thatcher has so brilliantly exploited.

The City Today

The rise in the power and importance of the City of London today may seem to provide the final confirmation of Anderson's view of the long history of British capitalism, always down-grading industry at home in favour of commercial activity overseas. Whatever the rhetoric, Thatcher was not interested in industrial competitiveness and certainly failed to restore it. This is certainly true, but it follows rather from her understanding of the demands of the giant transnational companies (her husband after all had been a director of BP) than from any commitment to the world-wide role of the City of London. From one viewpoint it must seem that the concessions made by the Thatcher government to the 'Big Bang', with freedom for a purely banking and commercial role to predominate in British capitalism, can be held to justify the whole Ingham thesis and Anderson's and Leys's support for it. From another view, however, the actuality of the 'Big Bang' is that the whole of world capitalism has become caught up in speculative activity that could dwarf that of the 1920s and end in an even more devastating crash.

The fact is that industrial companies are as deeply involved in this activity as the banks and commercial concerns. The merger mania in Britain in the last decade has been as much in industry as in finance. There has never been since the Second World War that sharp distinction between banking and industry that Ingham believes in and Anderson and Leys have seized upon. In my study of the City in 1958, repeated in 1966 and again in 1980, I found that about 140 merchant bankers sat on the boards of at least half the top 120 home industrial companies and of 40 of the biggest British overseas companies. In many cases of these top home and overseas companies the merchant banker was the chairman or deputy chairman.¹³⁸ Contrary also to what Ingham says about the finance of industry, while 80 per cent of the increase in gross assets of quoted companies in the 1960s continued to come from internal sources, the top 116 largest UK companies took 90 per cent of the new capital issued on the Stock Exchange. This hardly confirms Richard Minns's view, which Ingham quotes, that the merchant bankers were only on the boards of industrial and overseas companies to 'keep a watching brief'.¹⁴⁰ They performed the same coordinating function as the big banks in Germany and the *zaibatsu* in Japan.

The trouble with the great arches of continuity from which Anderson

¹³⁷ Barnett, p. 263. Geoff Brown, *Saboteage*, Spokesman, 1977, Part Six, pp. 271ff.

¹³⁸ Barratt Brown, 'The Controllers of British Industry', in K. Coates, ed., *Can the Workers Run Industry?*, London 1968, Table 13, and Barnett Brown and N. Pearson, 'Who Runs British Industry?', Northern College 1981. See also P. Arnold, *The Bankers of London*, Hogarth, ch. VI, 'The Money Barons'.

¹³⁹ Ingham, pp. 67ff. and Barratt Brown, 'The Controllers of British Industry', Table 2, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ R. Minns, *Pension Funds and British Capital*, London 1980, p. 114, quoted by Ingham, p. 73.

looks out is that major discontinuities tend to be missed. There can be no doubt that the new outflow today of British capital through portfolio investment in foreign companies is a major discontinuity—in 1986 £19 billion, compared with £9 billion of direct investment by British companies in their affiliates and subsidiaries.¹⁴¹ Ingham sees no discontinuity. In this he draws heavily on Minns's studies of banking capital's share in the profits of production throughout the world, although he criticizes Minns 'because he does not fully appreciate the precise nature of the City's practices which . . . are *commercial* rather than banking or finance'.¹⁴² In his book *Pension Funds and British Capital* published in 1980, Minns had argued that 'the whole of capital based in the UK could switch into financing while still remaining dependent on surplus value created elsewhere in the capitalist world'.¹⁴³ But he did not suggest that he thought it likely.

Leys, as we saw earlier, accepted totally the broader Ingham definition of 'commercial' activity, and Anderson naturally acknowledges 'the importance of the financial and commercial sectors within the UK economy today'.¹⁴⁴ Anderson, however, also clearly recognizes that the majority of the banks and, still more, of the assets in the City of London's markets are today not British but American, Japanese and continental European, and completes the sentence we have just quoted with the enigmatic words 'even as their articulation to it, viewed structurally, has become more attenuated. Under Thatcher the City has boomed as never before, but never so much as an enclave rather than an engine of British capitalism as a whole'.¹⁴⁵

So! after all that, where are we? The City bankers, with their landowning interests and their Treasury links, which provided the hegemonic form of British capital, are reduced now to a mere 'enclave of British capitalism as a whole'! And what would the whole be if the City is the enclave? Geoffrey Ingham's has become nothing more than the study of an enclave. Yet the tragic irony in all this is that the City today is truly but an enclave—not in British capitalism but in world capitalism—and not the engine of anything except of the revolving wheels of a casino. That it was not always so unproductive and that something is still left of British industry to build on I have tried earlier to demonstrate. Today we can indeed begin to understand what Ingham meant by 'commercial' as opposed to 'productive' activity. The Big Bang has been accompanied by a merger mania of gargantuan proportions. The number of Principals in the Stock Exchange is reduced to less than thirty. Eleven out of eighteen purchases of financial companies in the City in 1985–86 were made by foreign companies.¹⁴⁶ Take-over bids in British industry involving UK companies were valued in 1986 at over

¹⁴¹ *Economic Trends—March 1987*, HMSO, table 14.

¹⁴² Ingham, p. 248.

¹⁴³ Minns, op. cit., p. 17, and idem, 'Finance Capital and the Crisis in Britain', *Capital and Class* 14, Summer 1981.

¹⁴⁴ Anderson, pp. 69–70.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Noel Alexander Associates, *New Letters*.

£50 billions.¹⁴⁷ Why bother about developing their productive strengths if so much money can be made by such commercial activity?

Ingham is after all vindicated then? But no! this is a ~~new~~ phenomenon and there is nothing particularly English about it. United States financial houses are more heavily involved than British even in the City of London. Debt in the USA, which was in the 1960s standing at 50 per cent more than the value of US output, is now more than double that value.¹⁴⁸ The fact is that when world competition grows and profit rates decline, capital becomes cannibalistic. The pikes in the fish pond begin to eat each other. It was the same in the 1880s and 1890s, in the 1920s and 1930s and now again in the 1980s. The conclusion is not that we have a special kind of capitalism in Britain and one that the USA is set to follow, according to Anderson's last words, but rather that the pikes have always been particularly vicious here, and only from time to time have the fishes gathered enough strength to hold them at bay. If the pikes are now eating each other, the fishes should rejoice. But, to sustain Southey's metaphor a little longer, do we still have enough lively fish?¹⁴⁹

Table Two: UK Balance of Payments (£bn.), annual averages 1978-79 and 1985-86			
		1978-79	1985-86
Visible Exports		37.5	74
Imports		40.0	80
Deficit		-2.5 (excluding oil -1.5)	-6 (excluding oil -10.5)
Services: Financial	Credit	5.3	12
	Debit	-2.1	-4.5
	Balance	+3.2	+7.5
Other	Credit	8.2	12
	Debit	-8.1	-14.5
	Balance	0.1	-2.5
IPD Direct and portfolio	Credit	5.0	13.0
	Debit	-4.0	-9.5
	Balance	1.0	3.5
UK Banks	Credit	8.0	34.0
	Debit	-8.0	-34.0
	Balance	0.0	0.0

Source. *Economic Trends*

Note: IPD = Interest, Profits, Dividends

Anderson recognizes the importance of the City's foreign earnings—enclave though it may be—but it is easy to exaggerate their importance by showing how the positive balance of financial services in Britain's whole foreign payments balance covers the deficit (even after the oil revenues) on visible trade. The gross figures, however, are not compar-

¹⁴⁷ *Acquisitions Monthly*, August 1986

¹⁴⁸ US Department of Commerce, *Bulletin*

¹⁴⁹ Robert Southey, *St Thomas More or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*, London 1831, Vol 1, p 194

able, as Table Two shows. Britain's financial service income has trebled in the six years covered by the table, while exports only doubled in money terms, but the value of exports is still six times the value of financial services. This may be compared with the relative role of services and goods in the last century as shown in Table One. In the 1850s exports of goods were valued at four times the value of financial services and only three times in the 1900s. Today property income from overseas is only a sixth gross and a twentieth net of the value of exports, whereas in the late nineteenth century this income was equal to as much as a third of the value of exports. British capital cannot look to the City's earnings for its salvation. Still less can British labour. We shall have to find some more lively fish in the sea.

Conclusions

Anderson concludes his article with a sombre estimate of the hopes for British capital and for British labour. Britain lacks the technocracy of France, the interventionist banks of Germany, the coordinating and directive energy of State and *zaibatsu* in Japan or the disciplined Labour Movements of Sweden and Austria.¹⁵⁰ The UK state is a powerful instrument of coercion but not of social engineering. The British form of financial and mercantile capital has no industrial reconstructive power. British labour lacks central authority or the power of operative corporatism. Colin Leys sees no regenerative power in British manufacturing and recommends Ingham's analysis of the City and Industry because it must help to reduce the 'scope for prevarication about policy on the Left', and adds his own warning that the 'political weakness of industrial capital . . . is not a mysterious deficiency of British manufacturers but a product of their historic fear of the British working class—that has always led them to give priority to their alliances with other fractions of capital even at the expense of subordination within that alliance.'¹⁵¹ Ingham himself concludes with Marx's words that 'the gang which knows nothing about production and has nothing to do with it' remains firmly in control. Isolated and narrowly economic adjustments 'lack the necessary institutional political means', and attempts at their creation mobilize the most deeply entrenched forces of tradition in British society.¹⁵²

However firmly the three proponents of the City-Bank-Treasury nexus—Ingham, Leys and Anderson—have sought to claim for it a hegemonic role in British capital, reality has kept breaking through. And the reality is one of a deeply divided ruling class and of many ups and downs, many twists and turns among the dominant fractions and qualitative changes in that class.¹⁵³ The great arch gives a view only from a great height. Closer to the ground we have found many differing power groups and many changes of role and strategy. Capitalism is not

¹⁵⁰ Anderson, pp. 73–75.

¹⁵¹ Leys, 'Formation of Capital', p. 120.

¹⁵² Ingham, p. 235.

¹⁵³ This is the view also of Ben Fine and Laurence Harris, who devote a whole chapter of their book, *The Peculiarities of the British Economy*, London 1983, chapter 2, to a refutation of Ingham's thesis. Neither Anderson nor Leys appears to have noticed this work.

a monolith that Labour faces, and it is now more deeply divided than ever by the internationalization of capital and the new alliances of British and Japanese, British and German, British and Swiss as well as British and American financial and industrial groups.

At the same time, the divisions in the British working class have also to be recognized, the historic origin of sectional unions of trades, the aristocracy of labour, and the later industrial unions of the semi-skilled and general unions of the unskilled. But Anderson's notion that the weakness of industrial labour 'corresponds to' the weakness of industrial capital in the British class system is without foundation.¹⁵⁴ There is no large class of self-employed workers in commerce in Britain; it is, in fact, far smaller than in most other developed capitalist countries. There are no peasants. There is a strong professional middle class, but it is a class of employees of private capital or of the state. The numbers employed in the City are small indeed and all but a very few are women employed as clerks and incidentally among the more militant of the new recruits to trade unions. The major weakness of British workers is their insularity. This is the more serious today because the internationalization of capital demands a corresponding internationalism from labour. But the very fact that *capital in Britain* is becoming less and less *British-capital* removes at once the appeal of national interest which has in the past both reinforced the workers' insularity and incorporated them in national policies, in wars and imperialist adventures and in many lesser excursions that were not of their making or to their advantage.

I am predicting a much more open situation than the rigidly determined scenario that Anderson, Leys and Ingham have presented. The City of London is no longer a British institution but an international enclave. The radical right has retired its landed gentry to open their stately homes to the public at weekends in the summer. What remains of British industry still holds a few commanding heights and not only in the hypermarkets. Even British management shows signs of improvement. Local government has fought back against the central state with remarkable resilience. The trade unions have come through the ravages of unemployment and the attacks of the Thatcher government with the loss of only the extra three million members that they added to their number in the 1970s, and with a strengthened commitment to political activity. A new generation of trade union representatives has emerged at the workplace with a level of education that is qualitatively different from that of their fathers and mothers. Their current concern is just to survive, but this could be transformed by effective political leadership. Their links with the professional workers have been strengthened by the shared impact of Thatcher's hammer; their association with the hundreds of special issue groups ranging from Age Concern and Shelter to CND and War on Want has stemmed the leak of the professions into the SDP, if only just. The country's educational system is slowly recognizing the claims of technology, CDT is an important element in the school curriculum and there are more home computers per hundred households than anywhere else in the world. Thatcher has ravaged the

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, p. 57

universities, but some centres of excellence have survived; and there are moles in the Treasury. Another paper is required to indicate how these remaining bridgeheads for the future advance of Labour in Britain might be exploited.

All this is on the assumption that the whole structure of world capital does not shortly collapse.¹⁵⁵ This question is what should be drawing our attention, not the peculiar crisis of Britain within that structure. British capital is certainly peculiarly exposed because of the weakness of its industrial base and its extended international linkages. But the main centre of the crisis lies elsewhere. One has cried 'Wolf!' before—in the crisis of 1929, in the Korean War, in the oil hike of 1973. Each time the structure held. Can it, however, survive the vast accumulation of world debt today and the unprecedented deficit of the strongest capitalist state? As in 1929, the statesmen seem to be mesmerized. 'We have nothing to fear from a world slump,' I heard Mr Lawson say, echoing President Hoover's 'Prosperity has come to stay' of October 1929. But if the wolf is really at the door this time, what defences do we have? And, since we cannot fight alone, what allies can we win in other countries?

¹⁵⁵ It should be noted that this was sent to press before the crash of October 1987, which has simply reinforced my argument.

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Feminist Politics in Japan

The situation of women in Japan, perhaps the most advanced capitalist nation today, raises a number of issues that will seem at once familiar and highly distinctive to an international readership.* What is the role of women's labour, and how have capital and the state attempted to regulate it? How have women themselves theorized this relationship? What is the ideological importance of motherhood? How has the state attempted to use or regulate women's reproductive capacity? The answers to these and other questions will express the fact that the problems facing contemporary Japanese women are essentially the problems of advanced capitalism, though inserted within a cultural framework that is considerably different from those of Europe or America. The present article will take a broad view of feminist politics in Japan, and not seek to push everything into a falsely unified 'women's movement'. Women have also been active in, for example, consumer, peace and anti-pollution groups, often contributing in these ways to a feminist critique of Japanese society. We must begin our analysis, however, with a

brief account of the historical background of modern Japan. For while discussion of women no longer focuses on issues of economic development—as it often does in other Asian countries—it is necessary to consider certain decisions made in the early days of Japan's modernization that have had a powerful influence on the position of women today.

The Imperial Legacy

The years from 1868 to 1898, following the Meiji Restoration, were a period of intense economic and political modernization, in which female factory labour played a significant role. The first industrialization was carried out in the textile industry, and the capital gained was then reinvested in heavier and heavier industry. Revenue for the modernization programme was raised by the imposition of a land tax that placed major stress on rural areas, and it was above all the daughters of poor farmers who staffed the new factories—they accounted for more than sixty per cent of the industrial labour force until the 1920s. Others were sold to brothels or even sent to South-East Asia as *karayuki san* (prostitutes), their repatriated earnings forming an important source of foreign currency.

In these years the political and legal system of the new state was also established: Japan was to be a constitutional monarchy, with the democratic rights of the people—particularly women—severely limited. However, the importation of liberal ideas through the writings of Rousseau, Mill and Spencer gave justification to demands for 'Freedom and Popular Rights' and made possible the first theorization of feminism in Japan.¹ Kishida Toshiko toured the country giving speeches on behalf of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement, and Kusunose Kita became the first woman to demand voting rights on the grounds that she was the head of the family after her husband's death.²

For its part, the Japanese state failed to embrace liberal ideas in any real sense, preferring to base itself on the alternative model provided by Prussia. In the Constitution of 1890, individual rights and duties were defined as subject to the power of the Emperor,³ and there was little scope for women to demand 'natural rights' in a state which did not even recognize the concept. The Civil Code of 1898 introduced a number of laws which relegated women ideologically—if not in fact—to the domestic sphere in a patriarchal family based on the principle of primogeniture. Married women had no political rights and no claims over property brought into a marriage.⁴ Although they were now able

* I would like to express my thanks to Saito Chuyo, Aoki Yayoi and the women of the Asian Women's Association who generously made time to be interviewed in January 1987. Aoki, Saito and several other friends also provided books and other resources.

¹ R. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan*, Berkeley 1980, p. 200.

² S. L. Sievers, 'Feminist Criticism in 1880s Japan: The Experience of Kishida Toshiko', *Signs* 6/4, 1981.

³ H. Tanaka, M. Smith, *The Japanese Legal System*, Tokyo 1976, p. 637.

⁴ Women could not vote, and Article Five of the Law on Political Assembly and Association of 1889 (later to become the Peace Preservation Law) prevented women from joining political parties or attending political meetings.

to petition for divorce, the grounds were different for husbands and wives. Patriarchal power in the home was explicitly linked with Imperial power and played a crucial role in mobilizing loyalty to the Emperor as the figurehead of the new state.⁵ This family structure was presented as 'traditional' and 'uniquely Japanese', but in reality it was an imposition of the samurai form on a population which had shown a great diversity of marriage and inheritance practices from region to region.

Ideologies concerning women's role in the family—particularly the so-called *ryōsai kenbō* ('good wives and wise mothers') ideology—an amalgam of Confucian and Western ideas⁶—were developed to underline the importance of mothers as educators of children. A new emphasis on monogamy buttressed by ideas of romantic love compensated women for their lack of rights in the political sphere. Education was made compulsory for boys and girls in 1872, but much of women's schooling—even in the new women's colleges—was designed to fit individuals to the roles of wife and mother. Initially women's education was often carried on in mission schools, which promoted ideas of 'separate spheres' and romantic love in marriage. Although private women's colleges and medical schools were established, it was some years before women could attend national universities.

It is tempting to dismiss philanthropic societies such as the Red Cross and the Japanese chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union—both established in the 1880s—as conservative groups upholding a traditional view of women's role. Although they did not question marriage and the family, their welfare activities did bring them into contact with the situation of factory workers, prostitutes and other working women. Indeed, they were one of the few socially sanctioned ways for middle-class women to engage in activities outside the home.⁷ These groups also supported women's political rights and demanded an end to concubinage—like similar groups in the West, they were concerned with sexually transmitted disease and promoted monogamy and reform of male sexual behaviour as an answer to this problem.⁸ They campaigned against prostitution and publicized the problem of *karayuki-san*.⁹ The formation of the first patriotic women's organization (*Aikoku Fūjin Kai*) in 1901 mobilized conservative women into support for militarism.¹⁰

The first women's magazines were started in the late nineteenth century. Some concerned themselves with home and family, but others provided a forum for discussion of political ideas. Tokutomi Soho of the *Minyūsha*

⁵ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: The Ideology of the Late Meiji Period*, Princeton 1985, p. 265.

⁶ Takamura Itaru, *Jesse no Rekishi*, vol. 2, Tokyo 1972, pp. 79–83.

⁷ S. L. Severn, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*, 1983, pp. 87–113.

⁸ It is interesting to note that the Kyōfukai Temperance Union celebrated its centenary in 1986, making it perhaps the oldest women's group in Japan. Current activities of the group, involving a conception of women as 'victims', are strangely similar to those of the 1880s—for example, it recently set up a refuge for Asian women engaged in prostitution.

⁹ Severn, *op. cit.*, 1983, p. 93.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113. Mitchell, *Patriotic Women's Groups in Pre-War Japan*, unpublished thesis, Adelaide University, 1986.

established the *Katei Zasshi* (Home Magazine) at the height of discussions on the new family system,¹¹ while Iwamoto Zenji, principal of a women's college, launched the Christian-influenced *Jogaku Zasshi* (Women's Education Magazine) in 1885.¹² Contributors supported women's political rights, but argued for monogamous marriage based on romantic love, and emphasized women's education for the purpose of bringing up children.

Socialists and Suffragists

Socialist groups began to appear in the early 1900s. The first socialist magazine for women, also called *Katei Zasshi*, was edited by Sakai Toshihiko, a male journalist sympathetic to women's issues. In 1904, however, Socialist women established their own magazines: *Sweet Home* and *Nijuseiki no Fujin* (*Women of the Twentieth Century*). In one of the first editions of *Sekai Fujin* (*Women of the World*, 1907-09), editor Fukuda Hideko criticized the Patriotic Women's Association, and promoted pacifism and socialism.¹³ Independent socialist women's groups such as the *Sekurankai* and *Yokakai* appeared in the 1920s,¹⁴ and other socialist women were active in the women's divisions of unions and left-wing political parties.¹⁵ It was generally socialist women who raised the problems of working women, who had, after all, borne much of the burden of Japan's early stages of modernization. The first strikes in Japan had been carried out by female textile workers in the 1880s, but the male labour movement never successfully integrated women workers into the unions.¹⁶ Socialists were also linked with campaigns for the promotion of birth control and family planning, but the state considered such activities to be subversive. In 1922 Margaret Sanger was prevented from addressing public meetings on birth control. Later, in 1936, Ishimoto Shidzue opened the first birth control clinic, but she was arrested a year later and the clinic was closed down.¹⁷

The journal *Seito* (Blue Stocking)¹⁸ (1911-16) started as a women's literary journal, but its tone changed over the years under the influence of Swedish feminist Ellen Key's maternalist philosophy and Emma Goldman's anarchism. *Seitoshu* (the Blue Stocking Society) has proved to be the most memorable manifestation of feminism in pre-war Japan. The poetry of Hiratsuka Raicho and Yosano Akiko continues to be

¹¹ K. P. Pyle, *The New Generation in Meiji Japan*, Stanford 1969, pp. 140-41.

¹² Murakami Nobuhiko, 'Fujin Mondai to Fujin Kaibo Undo', *Iwanami Kenkyu Nihon Rakushu* 18.

¹³ Shirley Conroy Ushioda, 'Feminism and Pacifism in Japan: The Case of Fukuda Hideko', *Peace and Change*, 1976.

¹⁴ Murakami, op. cit., p. 248.

¹⁵ Totten, *The Social Democratic Movement in Pre-War Japan*, 1966, Large, 'The Romance of Revolution in Japanese Anarchism and Communism during the Taisho Period', *Modern Asian Studies* 11/2, 1977.

¹⁶ E. P. Tsurumi, 'Female Textile Workers and the Failure of Early Trade Unionism in Japan', *History Workshop Journal* 18, pp. 3-27.

¹⁷ Ishimoto Shidzue, *Facing Two Ways*, Stanford 1983.

¹⁸ The Blue Stockings have received the most attention from scholars in English. See N. Andrew, 'The Seitoshu: An Early Japanese Women's Organization', in A. M. Crang, ed., *Papers on Japan*, Harvard 1972; N. Lippitt, 'Seito and the Literary Roots of Japanese Feminism', *International Journal of Women's Studies* 1/2, 1975; P. Reich, A. Fukuda, 'Japan's Literary Feminists: the Seito Group', *Signs* 2/1, 1976.

quoted and Raicho is seen as a role model for some modern feminists.¹⁹ Although the pages of *Seito* may have lacked political sophistication,²⁰ involvement with the journal provided an opportunity for what we would now call 'consciousness raising' and many of its writers subsequently engaged in various kinds of feminist activism. Former members of the *Seitoshu* went on to form the first suffrage groups,²¹ to found other journals, and to participate in labour activism and proletarian writers' groups. Yamakawa Kikue eventually became the first head of the Women and Minors' Division of the Department of Labour in post-war Japan. Ichikawa Fusae directed the women's division of the early union group, the *Yamakai*, and was one of the most popular and visible members of the Diet in the post-war period.

In the nineteen-thirties two anarchist feminist journals appeared. Up till then anarchism had often been exemplified by a philosophy of 'direct action', with such women as Kanno Suga, Ito Noe and Kaneko Fumiko being involved in spectacular political incidents. Hasegawa Shigure, a former contributor to *Seito*, edited the anarchist feminist arts journal *Nyōnin Geijutsu* (*Women's Arts*) (1929-30), while historian Takamure Itsue established *Fujin Sensen* (*The Women's Front*) (1930-31), a journal devoted to political discussion. Takamure debated the merits of socialism and anarchism for women with such writers as Matsumoto Masae.²² She also wrote novels, poetry and political articles, but is chiefly remembered for her lifelong devotion to women's history.²³

In 1930 a bill for limited female suffrage was actually passed by the Lower House. (Universal manhood suffrage had been attained in 1925.) Feminists protested that they wanted full female suffrage or nothing at all, but at any event the bill failed to pass the Upper House and was one of the last opportunities for serious discussion of women's rights. After the Manchurian Incident of 1931 Japan's militarist policies were escalated, and women were also co-opted into support for the war effort. In 1932 the Third National Women's Suffrage Conference was able to issue a statement to the effect that 'From the standpoint of women, we firmly oppose the present rise of fascism',²⁴ but the last such conference was held in 1937, and its members were gradually co-opted into support for the military. In Japan, as in other countries, women's labour was mobilized for the war effort. However, this often

¹⁹ In 1978 the journal *Feminist* called itself the new *Seito*.

²⁰ Exceptions are the debates on prostitution (*Seito* 5/8) and abortion (*Seito* 6/1-2).

²¹ Hiratsuka Raicho and Ichikawa Fusae formed the *Shin Japen Kyō Kai* (New Women's Association) in 1919. Ichikawa founded the first suffragist association in 1925, after the modifications of Article Five of the Peace Preservation Law.

²² E. P. Tsurumi, 'Feminism and Anarchism in Japan: Takamure Itsue 1894-1964', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 17/2, 1985.

²³ Takamure's studies of pre-modern marriage practices and the role of female emperors still provide valuable resources for historians of Japanese women. Several aspects of her work, however, are being reconsidered. It is argued, for instance, that she did not distance herself sufficiently from the nationalist fervour of the 1930s, and that much of her polemic expressed a desire to return to the golden age of matrilineal society. See Yamashita Etsuko, 'Takamure Itsue: Bōsei no Kenkyū to Motoori Nozomiga', *Feminist* 4, 1985.

²⁴ Sano Noriko, 'Women's Movements in Wartime Japan', *Feminist International* 2, 1980, p. 77.

took the form of volunteer labour, while single or childless women were preferred for paid factory labour.²⁵

Left-wing political activity was forced underground in this period, and the only opportunity for the participation of women in public life was through the patriotic organizations. The Patriotic Women's Association had existed since 1901, and the Women's National Defence Organization (*Nihon Kokuso Fugin Kai*) was established in 1932. Eventually, all women were mobilized under the *Dai Nihon Fugin Kai* (All Japan Women's Association) in 1940.²⁶ Some feminists, most notably Ichikawa Fusae, appear to have genuinely believed that cooperation with the authorities would help to gain legitimacy for feminist demands.²⁷ But in the case of Yamada Waka, for example—another former member of the Seitoshu—participation in official structures marked a conservative ideological shift and illustrated the dangers of a simplistic maternalist philosophy.²⁸ Yamada and the Motherhood Protection League could claim to have achieved state support for the protection of widowed mothers in 1937, as feminists had been demanding for several years. But this reflected the ambivalent nature of the state's relationship to women, and was only granted when it could be linked to its pro-motherhood policies. The same regime arrested Ishimoto Shidzue for her promotion of birth control, enjoined women to produce more babies for the state, and only allowed abortion on eugenic grounds.

A brief summary cannot do justice to the range of feminist activity in pre-war Japan, but a number of areas have a definite relevance for contemporary feminism. The great interest in the meaning of motherhood was useful where a recognition of women's reproductive capacity was linked to analysis of the material basis of women's oppression, as in the debates among Hiratsuka, Yosano and Yamakawa on state protection for motherhood.²⁹ The valorization of motherhood, however, left women open to further exploitation. Maternalist values may be associated as easily with fascism as with pacifism, as is shown by the experiences of Nazi Germany and Italy under Mussolini.³⁰

There has been a link between feminism and pacifism since the earliest days of Japanese feminism. In 1904, during the Russo-Japanese war, Yosano Akiko was castigated for her anti-war poetry and Fukuda Hideko was critical of the pro-militarist Patriotic Women's Association. *Sekai Fugin* always carried reports on pacifist activities from overseas. However, the lack of a coherent theory of the links between sexism and militarism left women without the means to resist co-optation into

²⁵ B. Moloney, 'Women and Wartime Employment', *Feminist International* 2, pp. 81–82.

²⁶ Mitchell, op. cit. Kano Mikyo has called such activity 'illusory participation in society'. 'Zadankai Onna wa Seiji o Kacuru ka', *Joshi Kyokai* 30, Winter 1987, p. 21.

²⁷ Ichikawa's life exemplifies many of the dilemmas facing Japanese women in this century. With a strong record of activism in labour and feminist movements, both before and after the war, her activities were marked by a pragmatism which prompted her to cooperate with the militarist regime, on the grounds that she was seeking legitimacy for feminist causes.

²⁸ Yamazaki Tomoko, *The Story of Yamada Waka*, Tokyo 1986, p. 152.

²⁹ D. Bethel, 'Visions of a Humane Society: Feminist Thought in Taisho Japan', *Feminist International* 2, 1980, pp. 92–93.

³⁰ M. Maccocchi, 'Female Sexuality in Fascist Ideology', *Feminist Review* 1, Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, London 1986.

the war effort. The dominant pre-war view of women, shared by many non-socialist feminists, placed them firmly in the home and gave little recognition to the contribution of women's labour. This familial ideology was established in the early Meiji period, and it is one of the tasks of feminist historians to explode the myth of the unique, transhistorical Japanese family system, an ideological construct which has been used to justify women's relegation to the domestic sphere. After Japan's defeat in World War Two, there were to be dramatic changes in the legal position of Japanese women, but strong traces of pre-war ideologies and practices remained.

Post-War Reconstruction

During the Allied occupation from 1945 to 1952 Japan's legal system was completely overhauled, and General MacArthur is often given sole credit for the dramatic changes in the legal position of women. According to documents of the occupation forces, the rationale for granting female suffrage was that they would be more 'peace-loving' and challenge the militarist traditions of the Japanese state.³¹ But such a unilateral reading of history ignores the existence of a pre-war suffrage movement which demanded all of the legislative changes that were eventually introduced. Ichikawa Fusae has since recorded her own role in petitioning on these issues immediately after the surrender.³²

The Constitution of 1947 is one of the most liberal in the world. Thus Article 14, Para. 1 stipulates: 'All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.' This is extended to cover marriage, divorce and inheritance, and the Civil Code was revised after 1947 to meet the conditions outlined in the Constitution. 'Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of the husband and wife as its basis. With regard to the choice of spouse, property rights, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.'³³ Divorce is granted almost automatically by mutual consent, and the grounds for judicial divorce are the same for husband and wife.

As is so often the case, however, legislation has been a very limited means to change women's situation. Remnants of the patriarchal family system remained in the Nationality Law and Family Registration system, and the Household Registration Law gave the family an official legal status and implicitly recognized the father's role as its head. According to the Nationality Law, only men had the right to pass on Japanese nationality to their children—on the assumption that the father had the major power to determine the domicile and nationality of family members. The Abortion Law and protective provisions of the Labour

³¹ Quoted in Pharr, *Political Women in Japan*, 1981, p. 20.

³² Aoki Yayoi, 'Yakusetsu no Janne Desaku tachi', *Utsuo*, May 1975, pp. 171-97.

³³ Quoted in Naftulin, 'Women's Status under Japanese Laws', *Feminist International* 2, 1980, p. 13.

Standards Act encoded a view that women's primary role concerned motherhood—in both cases, it was an abstract concept of 'motherhood' that was to be protected, rather than the welfare of individual women.

The Labour Standards Act (1947) prohibited differential treatment in wages because of sex, provided women with menstruation, maternity and nursing leave, and banned their employment late at night or in dangerous occupations. It thus became possible to sue employers guilty of discriminatory practices, although, as we shall see, this was no easy matter. In the first post-war elections on 10 April 1946, an estimated 67 per cent of the twenty million eligible women cast their votes, and in more recent years female participation has actually exceeded that of men.³⁴ Already in 1946 several women were elected to the Diet. But although a number of female deputies have risen to prominence, women have rarely accounted for more than three per cent of the total membership of the two houses. Only three women have been appointed to the Cabinet throughout the post-war period. Despite the problems in mainstream political or union participation, however, women have often been to the fore in various kinds of grassroots politics.

In the immediate post-war period, women's political activities focused on questions that were bound up with a perception of their role as wives and mothers. Thus while the new female members of the Diet united in pressuring MacArthur to take action on food shortages, two large new organizations, the Chifuren (League of Regional Women's Organizations) and the Shufuren (Housewives Association), took shape around similar issues. The Shufuren, which took a rice-serving spoon as its symbol, has since developed large laboratories in Tokyo for testing products, as well as handling consumers' complaints about defective products and involving itself in campaigns to boycott overpriced goods.³⁵ It has often been women who have brought pollution problems to the attention of the nation—an important example was the campaign against the Chisso Corporation in Minamata, where most of the men, being on the company payroll, could not take action without endangering their livelihood.³⁶

Women have also been active in peace movements throughout the post-war period. In 1952, at the first and second meetings of *Nihon Fujin Kai*, women workers, housewives and students issued a call for peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons. *Chifuren* took up the peace issue in 1954, and *Habaoya Taikai* (The Mothers' Convention) grew out of this into a national pacifist movement.³⁷ In 1960, when Japan was due to ratify a Security Pact (usually abbreviated as 'Ampo') with the United States, more than forty women's groups joined left-wing organizations, trade unions and student groups in a protest movement that took up the presence of American bases on Japanese soil and Japan's integration

³⁴ Aoki, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

³⁵ D. Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun: Women of Modern Japan*, Colorado 1983, pp. 190–202.

³⁶ See Y. Matsui, 'Asian Women in Struggle', paper presented to the second Women in Asia Workshop, Monash University, Melbourne 1983, pp. 8–9, Smith, *op. cit.*

³⁷ G. Donovan, 'Comparative Studies of Women's Problems in Japan and Australia', unpublished thesis, Monash University.

into US military strategy. In Kitafuji, at the foot of Mount Fuji, struggles against the appropriation of common land (*iriaiichi*) by US forces and the Japanese *Jieitai* (Self-Defence Forces) have been carried on for several decades. There it is the 'grandmothers' who lead the movement—their sons are engaged in wage labour, while their daughters are responsible for child-care and farming. Years before Greenham Common, these grandmothers were occupying huts on the military practice grounds and employing various forms of active and passive resistance. The women of Kitafuji continue to provide inspiration for peace activists.³⁸

It could be argued that although women's involvement in such movements may initially have been an extension of their role in the home, the contradictory effect was to make many of them more open to a radical critique of gender relations. At any event, in the nineteen sixties when student militancy culminated in the occupation of several universities,³⁹ many women experienced similar contradictions to those of their sisters in America and Europe, and disillusionment with the (male) Left gave the impetus for a feminist critique of politics. One woman who was radicalized at this time was Saito Chiyo, the founder of the Agora women's resource centre in Tokyo.⁴⁰ In 1960 Saito watched with concern the demonstrations against the Security Pact with the United States, abhorring anything which might lead to a revival of Japanese militarism.⁴¹ When one of the protesters, Kanba Michiko, died in a confrontation with the police, Saito was moved to join the demonstrations, leaving her young child at home. This experience radicalized Saito, as she began to see that it was impossible for women to take an active role in the world of work or politics while inadequate childcare facilities kept them at home. She embarked on a three-year campaign to establish a childcare centre in her area, in the course of which she met many housewives and helped in the establishment of a 'Bank of Talents' (*Ginko Ginko*) so that women could employ their talents in the public sphere. Initially there were a number of problems—with the expectations of clients and the inexperience of the women themselves. It seemed that women needed not only to learn editing, writing, commercial and other practical skills, but also to develop confidence and assertiveness.

Eventually, Agora was created as a resource centre where women could consider their situation, engage in consciousness-raising and assertiveness-training, and gather information as a resource for feminist activity. The 'Labour Exchange' functions were carried out by BOC (the 'Bank of Creativity'). Agora has survived longer than many other feminist groups, and it is instructive that it grew out of the experiences of women themselves, and evolved into a form which best suited their needs. Agora now has centres all over Japan—each one having evolved to meet the needs of local women. This pattern recurs in feminist

³⁸ Ando Toshiko, *Kita Fuji no Omasa Tachi*, Tokyo 1982, L. Caldicott, 'At the Foot of the Mountain the Shibokusa Women of Mount Fuji', in Lynn Jones, ed., *Keeping the Peace*, London 1982.

³⁹ For discussion of the student Left, see Muto Ichijo and Inoue Reiko, 'The New Left: Part Two', *Aspe*, vol. 17, no. 3.

⁴⁰ The following account is based on the author's interview with Saito, January 1987.

⁴¹ Saito's thoughts on pacifism and feminism, and her experiences during the Second World War, are contained in her 'Feminismu to Sensō', *Agora* 24, May 1981.

politics in Japan. A group of women meet to try to solve some problem close to their own lives—pollution, childcare, consumer issues, the usurpation of their land by military bases. Although they may not initially describe themselves as 'feminist', they are then led inevitably to a critique of the politics of gender in Japanese society.

Fighting Women

By the 1970s Japan's economy was firmly established on the basis of spectacular growth, largely in steel processing and manufacturing. By 1978, 65 per cent of all working women were married—many of whom had returned to temporary or part-time labour in their late thirties or early forties, after child-rearing responsibilities had eased.⁴² It was against this background that new forms of women's political activity began to develop around specifically feminist themes.

In the early 1970s the *Tatakae Onna* (Fighting Women) group was formed to combat conservative moves to eliminate those clauses in abortion law which allowed pregnancies to be terminated on the grounds that the mother's welfare would be affected for 'economic reasons'. Members continued to experiment with communal living and childcare, and set up the Shinjuku Women's Liberation Centre.⁴³ The Journal *Onna Eros* (Women—Eros) provided a forum for discussion of marriage, sexuality, prostitution, labour and politics from a literary and theoretical perspective.⁴⁴ Countless smaller groups were also formed in the 1970s, and their roneoed newsletters formed the basis of a '*mini-komi*' (mini-communications) alternative to the '*mass-komi*' (mass communications) which had no place for discussion of women's issues—except in a sensationalist or patronizing manner. The phrase *onnan ribu* (women's lib) became a focus of attention in the mass media—but was often the butt of ridicule.

Radical lesbian groups were also formed at this time, and such publications as *Subarashii Onnatachi* (Wonderful Women) and *The Dykes* carried panel discussions, translations and writings on the political meaning of lesbianism. They also attempted to retrieve a history of lesbianism in Japan⁴⁵—a significant gap in historical and contemporary accounts of Japanese feminism. The L.F. Centre ran women's parties, consciousness-raising and self-defence classes for women, and some of its members later founded the first Rape Crisis Centre in Tokyo. Recently the group *Regumi* has established a newsletter and created a new venue for lesbian feminist activities. Lesbian feminist groups have often been on the periphery of Japanese feminist activity, but have always had strong international links.

⁴² Ohashi, Terue, 'The Reality of Female Labour in Japan', *Feminist International* 2, Tokyo, 1980, p. 17; Kaji Etsuko, 'The Invisible Proletarian Working Women in Japan', *Social Praxis* 1973, pp. 375–87.

⁴³ Aoki Yayoi, *Joson sono ato no shomura*, Tokyo 1982, p. 55.

⁴⁴ *Onna Eros* survived until 1982, and the final issue was timely in its discussion of pacifism and women's liberation. *Onna Eros*, No. 17, *Joson Kanko nakushitsu, bunron nashi*.

⁴⁵ *The Dykes* 2, June 1978, pp. 3–9.

It is no accident that this flowering of feminist activity roughly coincided with similar activities in Europe, America and Australia. In all of the advanced capitalist nations women were experiencing the contradictions of an education which seemed to promise self-fulfilment, and a labour market based on inequalities of class and gender.⁴⁶ In Japan, too, many women had become disillusioned with left-wing politics which ignored or dismissed feminist demands. If Japanese women turned to America and Europe for theoretical tools to explain their situation, this was because they were experiencing similar contradictions. Several feminist classics were translated into Japanese, and their influence was marked—Margaret Mead's *Male and Female*, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*.

While many women pursued 'liberation' at an individual level, by engaging in consciousness raising around the themes of sexuality, body and ideology, there was also a strong strand of reformism. Women were demanding institutional changes such as an Equal Opportunity Act, and reform of the education system, in the hope that the guarantees of equality encoded in the Constitution could somehow be translated into reality. International Women's Year and the ensuing International Decade for Women had an incalculable effect on Japanese feminist politics. Such groups as *Kokusai Fujin Nen o Kikkaku toshite Kodosha onnatachi no kai* (The International Women's Year Action Group) were able to combine domestic activity with international pressure through such forums as the International Women's Decade conferences in Copenhagen, Mexico City and Nairobi. *Kodosha kai* was divided into smaller working groups, each of which carried out research and presented lectures and public meetings on a particular theme such as education, work, the media or divorce. A large number of *Kodosha Kai*'s members were educated working women such as teachers or public servants, and their activities were closely related to the concerns of these sectors. The group published books and pamphlets on non-sexist education, family law, problems of working women, and divorce. It also showed considerable skill in attracting media attention through demonstrations and sit-ins, and its campaign against a sexist TV commercial is still remembered.⁴⁷

In 1977 the poet and academic Atsumi Ikuko founded a new journal, *Feminist*, which was much more ambitious than most of the 'mini-komi' and attempted to reach a broader audience. *Feminist* was interested in the development of a women's culture, and had a theoretical rather than activist orientation. As we have seen, Atsumi acknowledged the heritage of early feminism by titling the journal 'The New Seito'. Despite

⁴⁶ By 1974 approximately equal numbers of male and female high-school graduates were advancing to higher education (31.6 per cent of males and 30.8 per cent of females). However, women tended to go on to two-year colleges, while men generally studied at four-year universities. In 1974 women were only 18 per cent of the enrolment at four-year universities, and roughly a half majored in language and literature. Only one per cent of women were engaged in postgraduate studies. Lebra, Paulson, Powers, 'Introduction', *Women In Changing Japan*, 1976.

⁴⁷ The commercial showed a woman preparing a packet of noodles saying 'I'm the one who cooks it' and a man eating the noodles saying 'I'm the one who eats it'. The group protested that this perpetuated a sexist view of male and female roles, and succeeded in having the commercial removed.

financial difficulties, *Feminist* survived to seventeen issues over three years, carrying work by Japanese feminist academics on labour conditions, the media, the family, education and motherhood, and introducing such writers as Adrienne Rich and Sylvia Plath in translation. It also published two English-language editions, in an attempt to integrate the journal into an international network of feminist communication. It was not until 1978 that the All Japan Feminist Association was formed by Atsumi and her colleagues, but even then it could not be said that *Feminist* managed to forge strong links with feminist activism in Japan.

The Law and Equal Opportunity

By 1978, the women of *Kodoshun Kai* had framed a clear set of demands for legislative change. In December 1978, *Watashi tachi no koyo byodobo o tsukeruru onna tachi no Kai* (Group to Frame Our Own Equal Opportunity Act) was formed in order to bring pressure on the government for the creation of an equal opportunity act and the removal of sexist provisions from the Nationality Law. Even in 1978, it was possible to sue a company for sexual discrimination on the grounds that it contravened guarantees of equality under the Constitution, but such legal action was expensive and time-consuming, and each case had to be argued on an individual basis.⁴⁸ Equality provisions of the Labour Standards Law only covered wages, and not promotion or retirement, but many judgements referred to Article 14 of the Constitution, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, or Article 90 which requires that 'good law and order are to be maintained'.⁴⁹ The Labour Standards Law also gave women protection from overtime or night-time work, and this was to be the most controversial aspect of demands for legislative change. Women demanded an equal opportunity act *with* the retention of protective provisions, while the government attempted a trade-off, whereby the Equal Opportunity Act would be implemented and protective provisions removed.

The International Women's Year Action Group was able to mobilize sufficient international pressure to embarrass the Government into signing the Treaty to End All Forms of Sexual Discrimination in Copenhagen in 1980, with a commitment to ratify the Treaty by 1985. The Government turned this into a successful public relations exercise by having Nobuko Takahashi—one of the few female ambassadors—sign the treaty on its behalf. Over the next five years, women campaigned ceaselessly in the hope that Japan would introduce an equal opportunity act which had some potential for changing the situation of working women in Japan. All opposition political parties produced draft legislation, and the most progressive was presented to the Diet by Socialist

⁴⁸ Miyo Nakamoto sued the Nissan Motor Company over discriminatory retirement provisions in 1969, but it was not until 1982 (after several appeals) that the Supreme Court decided in her favour. There have also been several judgements upholding the principle of equal pay for equal work, but this could easily be circumvented by reclassification of job titles. A further problem is that precedent does not have the same status in Japanese law that it does in British or Australian legal practice. See Cook and Hayashi, *Working Women in Japan: Discrimination, Resistance and Reform*, Cornell University 1980, pp. 58–63.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

member Tanaka Sumiko. Although *Sobyo* (the Japan Council of Trade Unions) paid lip service to the principle of equality, unions provided little support in anti-discrimination cases. One reason is that most labour contracts only cover individual companies, and national union federations have little jurisdiction at this level. It is also true, however, that the union hierarchy is male-dominated—even in industries with large numbers of female workers. Responsibility for childcare often makes union activity practically impossible for women. Nor have unions shown much interest in providing representation for temporary or part-time workers.⁵⁰

The Equal Opportunity Act introduced in May 1985 (effective from 1 April 1986) is a travesty which is virtually free of punitive provisions, and promises little real change. The act is based on a philosophy of 'equality of opportunity' rather than 'equality of result' and is not backed up by affirmative action programmes. Companies will be encouraged to 'make efforts' to abolish discrimination in recruitment, hiring, transfer and promotion. They are prohibited from discrimination in retraining, welfare, retirement and retrenchment, but no penalties are specified. Where a dispute arises, there are three stages of reconciliation—within the company, through the local Women and Minors' Bureau of the Department of Labour, and through the local Equal Opportunity Board.

Nineteen eighty-seven was the first year when university graduates sought employment under the new Act, and we are awaiting statistics on whether it has had any effect at all. Although some feminists feel that any act is better than none, most feel that the present law is useless. There is some recent evidence, however, that courts are willing to give a liberal interpretation to the Act. In the case against *Tetsuren* (the Japan Association of Steel Manufacturers)—widely seen as a test of how courts would interpret the Constitution in the light of the Equal Opportunity Act—the Tokyo District Court ruled in December 1986 that having separate career tracks for men and women was in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution. The court stated that differences in promotion and allowances were unconstitutional, but that the company had discretion in the deployment of staff. In another recent case in the Tottori District Court, female teachers were awarded compensation and costs on the grounds that they had been discriminated against in retirement provisions.⁵¹

During International Women's Decade, public money was poured into conferences, resource centres and a National Education Centre for Women. Nearly every prefecture and major city now boasts some kind of women's centre. It is tempting to dismiss such changes as merely cosmetic—as vote-catching exercises—and there is some truth in this view. I, for example, wondered whether women would not rather have an adequate childcare centre than yet another women's library. My scepticism was softened, however, on visiting the Tokyo Women's Resource Centre in Idabashi. Its shelves carried a range of feminist

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 83–85.

⁵¹ Nakajima Michiko, 'Hataraku Joesu no Sabetsu Teppai e Zenshin', *Fuga Tenbo*, January 1987, p.

publications, and the noticeboard displayed fliers for feminist groups and part-time workers' unions. The centre itself often provided a venue for meetings, so that there may be more radical potential in these centres than was realized by anyone at a governmental level. Most feminist groups, however, are fierce in their insistence on independence from government support.

It is also true to say that there has been some change in attitudes in the last few years. Some women are now able to pursue careers and an independent lifestyle without undue pressure, and it is possible to see some men sharing childcare and, for example, taking children to and from creches. For the majority of men, however, their working conditions preclude any participation in domestic labour, and their long working hours are the major stumbling block to any change in the sexual division of labour. Indeed, the commitment they show to their companies would be impossible without the support of women's domestic labour. The mass media, however, continue to present a stereotypical view of men and women, and there is less consciousness of the sexism in everyday language and behaviour than we find in Australia or America. Women in the mass media are mothers, sexual objects, or non-threatening child-figures. Some chapter titles in Ian Buruma's book on Japanese popular culture are instructive—for example, 'The Eternal Mother' or 'Demon Woman'.⁵² In the pages of the comics read by male students and workers on rush-hour trains, women are subjected to violence, rape and mutilation. Similar fantasies are enacted in pornographic movies.

Media stories are also instrumental in instilling a sense of guilt in working mothers. When, for example, a death occurred in a private childcare centre, media rage was directed against the mother rather than the inadequacy of public childcare facilities.⁵³ Sexism is linked to racism in the portrayal of Asian women. Weekly pulp magazines provide guides to brothels in Manila and Seoul, and recent articles on Filipino women have linked them with the spread of AIDS in Japan—with no discussion of the responsibility of their male customers. As mentioned above, the International Women's Decade did provide Japanese women with an opportunity to form links with women in other countries. On an individual level, women could exchange information and ideas, while at a national level, these contacts could be used to bring international pressure on a government always sensitive to overseas opinion. Another important by-product of International Women's Decade was the way in which Japanese women became conscious of their situation as part of Asia. Too often in the past, women had looked to Europe and America for inspiration, and had neglected consideration of women in neighbouring countries.

⁵² Ian Buruma, *A Japanese Mirror: Heroes and Villains of Japanese Popular Culture*, Harmondsworth 1985.

⁵³ Matsui Yayoi, 'Contempt for Women and Asians in the Japanese Press', *Feminist International* 1, 1978, pp. 12–14.

Japan and Asia

One reason for Japan's spectacular economic growth in the post-war period was the stimulus provided by its support facilities for American military operations in Asia. In the 1950s Japan's economy benefited indirectly from the Korean War, and in the 1960s from the Vietnam War. Within Japan, the people affected most directly by this relationship lived near American bases or the proposed Narita airport. The women of Kitafuji and the farmers of Sanrizuka (Narita), for example, expressed solidarity with the peoples of Asia and described their own struggles as 'guerrilla warfare'.⁵⁴

In the 1970s Japan's economic activities in Asia came under scrutiny, and it was often women's groups who brought them to public attention. By the 1970s, Japanese industry had moved 'offshore' in search of cheaper labour and fewer controls over environmental pollution. It was Filipino, Korean or Indonesian workers—often women—who provided labour for these enterprises. Japanese women were affected by this process of restructuring as jobs were lost in manufacturing and created in service industries, while South-East Asian women found themselves often having to make a dubious choice between sweated labour in electronics or textile plants and the provision of sexual services for the tourist industry.⁵⁵

The issue of 'sex tours' to South-East Asia by Japanese men forced Japanese women to think of the economic, political and ideological links between their own situation and that of Asian women. The Asian Women's Association was most active in raising this issue through public meetings, lectures, publications and demonstrations. Matsui Yayori—one of the group's founders and one of the few women to reach an editorial position in a major Japanese newspaper—used the pages of the *Asahi Shinbun*, often meeting opposition from senior editorial staff. Working groups within the Asian Women's Association conducted research into Japan's economic activities in Asia, the structure of the tourist industry, the Nationality Law, the sexual division of labour in Japan and South-East Asian countries, and attitudes to the issue of prostitution in Japan. Their findings were publicized through the journal *Ajia to Josei Kaibo* (Asian Women's Liberation) and the lecture series *Onna Daigaku* (Women's University). These issues were linked with women's own lives through consideration of *Kurasbi no naka no ajia* (Asia in everyday life). Members of the association considered how the food, clothes, electrical goods and cosmetics they used every day were often produced by Asian women under shocking working conditions and curtailment of political rights. The Asian Women's Association also concerned itself with political repression and liberation struggles in Korea, the Philippines and other countries. These concerns were linked with a consciousness of Japanese history, while economic imperialism was related to Japan's military activities in the 1930s and

⁵⁴ Ando Toshiko, *Kita Eiji no Onna tachi*, Tokyo 1982, p. 128

⁵⁵ The economic relationship between Japan and South-East Asia, and the effects on South-East Asian women, are discussed in V. Mackie, 'Division of Labour: Multinational Sex in Asia', in G. McCormack and V. Sugimoto, eds., *Japan: Modernization and Beyond*, Cambridge, forthcoming

40s, and 'sex tours' to a history of exploitation of women's sexuality in the process of Japan's modernization.

One of the most successful campaigns of the Asian Women's Association—led by Socialist Diet member Doi Takako—concerned the removal of sexist provisions of the Nationality Law. Under an amendment passed in January 1983, Japanese women may now pass on nationality to their children, and their non-Japanese husbands may be naturalized under the same conditions as non-Japanese wives. More generally, members of the Association have seen it as their responsibility to act in solidarity with Asian women, rather than pitying them as 'victims'. The Association has particularly strong links with Filipino and Korean groups, and has often staged joint demonstrations with them on the issue of 'sex tours'.

One group which has not completely purged itself of the 'victim' mentality is the *Nihon Kirisutokyo kyofukai* (Japan's WCTU). The most recent manifestation of the exploitation of Asian women's sexuality is *Japayuki-san*—the Filipino and Thai women who come to Japan to work and are often tricked into prostitution. The *Kyofukai* has set up a shelter for these women, and such charitable activities are strangely reminiscent of the group's philanthropic activities of the late nineteenth century. It also, however, engages in educational activities, and has produced a slide presentation called *Sachiko's Story*⁵⁶ in an attempt to make Japanese women think of the situation of Asian women in their own countries, and now in Japan's bars and Turkish baths.

The women's Shelter, which was established by a grant from the Ichikawa Fusae Foundation⁵⁷ and is supported by other groups such as the Asian Women's Association, the International Women's Year Action Group, and the International Feminists of Japan, was originally intended to rescue Asian women as victims of oppression, but the refuge has also been used by Japanese women who have suffered domestic violence. Perhaps this will prompt the women of the *Kyofukai* to consider more deeply the links between the oppression of women in Japanese society, and the oppression perpetrated by Japan in South-East Asia. That is, such activities may provide one more strand of the increasingly coherent critique of structures of domination and subordination which has been developed by Japanese women in the 1980s.

The Late 1980s: Beyond 'Women's Issues'

The past few years have seen more than a simple continuation of Liberal Democratic Party rule. The LDP has now firmly consolidated its hold on power, and the rightist policies of the Nakasone faction have gained ascendancy. Military matters are once again a focus of attention, and a new note of nationalism is apparent.⁵⁸ In 1987, for the first time, military

⁵⁶ Presented at a meeting of the International Feminists of Japan, February 1987

⁵⁷ Ichikawa, who died in 1981, left money for the establishment of a fund for feminist activities

⁵⁸ Many of these developments were predicted by Gavan McCormack and others in G. McCormack and Y. Sugimoto, eds., *Democracy in Contemporary Japan*, Sydney 1986

spending passed the notional boundary of one per cent of GDP, and welfare cuts continue.

Policies of privatization of national industries are putting strain on the labour market, and have dealt a major blow to the union movement and the parties of the Left. The National Railways, the Tobacco and Salt Corporation and the telephone corporation have already been privatized, and Japan Airlines will be next. The splitting of the National Railways into eight regional authorities caused the loss of an estimated 100,000 jobs. Many employees were retired from the National Railways and re-employed by the new regional corporations, but those who were known to have engaged in union activity were seldom rehired, and several suicides by union leaders have been reported.⁵⁹ A more serious consequence, however, was the dismantling of the railway-workers' *Kokuro*, one of the strongest and most militant unions, and a significant part of the power-base of *Sohyo* (the left-wing Japan Council of Trade Unions). *Sohyo*, in turn, is a major source of support for the Japan Socialist Party.

At the same time, the high value of the yen has weakened export industry and intensified the trend for large companies to protect their profit margins by moving overseas. Many of the small and medium-scale enterprises subcontracted to the major firms have actually been forced to close. According to a recent article in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, unemployment has reached its highest level (2.8 per cent) since 1947, and is projected to rise to 4.2 per cent by 1991.⁶⁰ Although the real figures are probably much higher, the trend is clear. Technological change has also affected the labour market, and the emphasis within Japan is on the development of high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries. Between 1970 and 1982 most new jobs were created in technical, clerical and service industries, and 40 per cent of new jobs were temporary positions.⁶¹ Recent figures on women's labour confirm these trends and show that women still constitute the most vulnerable sector of the labour market.⁶²

Between 1975 and 1985 the number of female workers increased by 35 per cent. There are now almost 16 million female salaried workers, who make up 35.9 per cent of the total number of salaried workers and exceed the number of full-time housewives by some 200,000. Seventy per cent of these workers are married, widowed or divorced and 58.3 per cent are over 35. In 1985, part-time workers accounted for 22 per cent of the female labour force—the total figure of 3,330,000 representing an increase of 50,000 over 1984. The most dramatic increase in female employment has been in information services and advertising (159.8 per cent), commodity leasing (155.6 per cent), food and beverage marketing (106.2 per cent), department stores (64.5 per cent) and medicine (62 per

⁵⁹ Peter Hatcher, 'Why Japan's Industrial Muscle Has Atrophied', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 April 1987.

⁶⁰ R. Richardson, 'The End of Jobs for Life', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 January 1987.

⁶¹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 'Sources of Conflict in the "Information Society"', in McCormack and Sugimoto, eds, op cit.

⁶² 'Rodo sho fujin kyoku', *Fujin Rodo no Jitsuro*, quoted in *Fujin Tambo*, November–December 1986, pp. 14–15.

cent). In 1975 the proportion of women in managerial positions was 5.3 per cent, and in 1985 was still only 8.5 per cent. Statistics, however, probably give little indication of the number of women involved in *mizusobai*—bars, Turkish baths and entertainment.

The vulnerability of women workers is increased by the trend towards seconded labour and outworking. Many workers formerly employed as regular employees are now employed on a casual basis through agencies,⁶³ and much word-processing is carried out at home on a piece-work basis. *ME Kakumai* (Micro Electronic Revolution) and *OA* (Office Automation) have been 'buzz-words' in recent years, but these trends have done nothing to improve the situation of working women.⁶⁴ The Equal Opportunity Act is of little use to women in vulnerable positions in small companies, and the union movement—which has seldom been involved in achieving improvements in women's position—has been seriously weakened. The next concern of women workers—indeed, all workers—in Japan is the eventual form of the Labour Standards Law. Proposed amendments to this law, presented to the Diet in March 1987 but not yet passed, contain the following points, in addition to the removal of protective provisions for women workers:⁶⁵ (1) Working hours at present are 48 hours a week. These will be reduced progressively to 46 and 44 hours, with the 40-hour week being the ultimate target. This, however, only applies to firms employing more than 300 workers. (2) Working hours may be variable, calculated on a three-monthly rather than a daily or weekly basis. (3) Full-time workers are to receive ten days paid annual leave. Part-time workers will receive leave on a pro-rata basis. (4) Overtime, holiday labour and offsite working conditions are to be regulated by management-labour negotiation.

The removal of daily limits on working hours and the provision for labour-management negotiation will result in a de facto deregulation of working conditions. Now that only 23 per cent of Japanese workers are unionized,⁶⁶ this will mean a significant weakening of the power of labour. In non-unionized workplaces, negotiation may be carried out between management and 50 per cent of regular (*not* part-time or casual) staff. If these amendments are carried, the situation of women workers, casual workers in the computer industry, and other part-time workers and outworkers will be seriously weakened. The only optimistic note in the present situation is the trend towards the creation of part-time workers' unions, which seem to have had an effect on some workplaces, if not on a national basis.⁶⁷ It seems, then, that the so-called Equal Opportunity Act may have been achieved at the cost of de facto deregulation of working conditions in Japan.

⁶³ The situation of these workers is discussed in Isobe Akiko et al., 'Tadayou Rodo Yabukareru Onna Tachi', *Shin Nihon Bungei* 459, January 1987, pp. 60–61. The trend towards outworking and seconded labour was officially recognized in the Labour Dispatch Law of 1985.

⁶⁴ Committee for the Protection of Women in the Computer World, 'Computerization and Women in Japan', *Ampo* 15/2, p. 18.

⁶⁵ This discussion follows Kenmochi Kazumi, 'Yowai mono jime no Rokiho Kaiser', *Asahi Jomaru*, 3 April 1987, pp. 20–24.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ See Isobe et al., *op. cit.*, p. 49. The Edogawa Union was established in 1984. There are now 33 part-time unions throughout the country.

The connection between Equal Opportunity and removal of protective provisions is, of course, thoroughly tendentious. If *all* Japanese workers had the protection afforded workers in other advanced countries, there would be no need for special provisions for women other than parenting leave. It has been suggested that there is insufficient consciousness of class in the Japanese women's movement, but feminists' insistence on the retention of protective provisions reflects a recognition that vulnerable women workers will be affected most by any change to the Labour Standards Law—that is, feminist activists have refused to be divided into 'elitist' and 'anti-elitist' factions.

'A Japanese-style Welfare State'?

Another factor which affects the structure of the labour market and the position of women is the ageing of Japanese society. Japan now has the longest life expectancy in the world, and aged people number roughly ten per cent of the population. At the moment there are five working people for every aged person, but this ratio is expected to decrease to 3.9:1 by the year 2000, and 2.5:1 by 2020.⁶⁸ Despite this increase in the numbers of aged people requiring welfare, the government share of medical and other expenses has been progressively cut, and the individual's share of the burden increased. According to the dominant ideology, the aged have traditionally been cared for in an extended family where three generations shared the same residence. This view, however, is romantic in the 1980s, when most families live in houses or apartments barely large enough to house a basic nuclear unit, and many families of 'salarymen' are transferred to regional areas for part of the husband's career, thus putting further strain on the extended family. Although the nuclear family with both parents may still be the norm, the number of families headed by females is rising. In 1983 there were 718,000 such families, a 13 per cent increase since 1978. The average household income of female-headed families was 45 per cent of the national average, and almost 80 per cent of divorced wives received no support from their former husbands.⁶⁹

Slogans concerning the 'unique' Japanese family system and LDP calls for 'a Japanese-style welfare state'⁷⁰ reflect a desire to make the family shoulder the major burden of care for the aged and the handicapped. While women are mainly engaged in part-time labour, they will be able to look after the aged and handicapped. This burden cannot be shared by men while they work the longest hours of any developed country. The 'Japanese-style welfare state' will also be supported by promotion at the local level of volunteer work by women.

Given the present political situation, many feminist groups concentrated in 1987 on a balance-sheet of International Women's Decade, and on the consideration of priorities for action in the next few years. Agora celebrated its fifteenth anniversary in the summer of 1987, and Saito

⁶⁸ Korei ka shakai o yuku sasu josei no kai, *Dasu joshi han joshi ni yoru seiyu mondai shuppan* (1986), p. 74.

⁶⁹ Official statistics quoted in *Japan Foundation Newsletter*, June 1985.

⁷⁰ McCormack, *op cit*, p. 53.

Chiyo was confident that this would mark the start of a new generation of activity for the group.⁷¹ Saito now shares much of the running of *Agora* with a group of paid workers, and the journal *Agora* is on a firm financial basis. The BOC office is run in accordance with Saito's views on humane working conditions—although wages are low, each worker's hours allow her to devote time to children or other responsibilities. According to Saito's vision for Japanese society, men too would work reduced hours, and this would allow them to share childcare and care for the handicapped and aged.

The Asian Women's Association celebrated its tenth anniversary in March 1987. Its journal, *Asian Women's Liberation*, is relatively secure financially, and the Association has continued its concern with Japan's economic activities in Asia and political and cultural links with other Asian women. A recent issue of the journal carried songs and poetry from women in several Asian nations, accompanied by comment on the political situation.⁷² The major theme for the group's activities in 1987 is the problem of 'development aid'—How is Japan's foreign aid affecting women in Asia? Does it benefit the local people or Japanese capital? The group is keen to hear from women in other countries working on the issue of development aid. Matsui Yayori notes that the themes of International Women's Decade were 'Peace, Equality and Development'. In Japan, she notes, the first two were given emphasis at the expense of considering how 'development' affected third-world women. The present activities of the Asian Women's Association are an attempt to redress this balance.⁷³

The International Women's Year Action Group has been reborn as the Women's Action Group (*Kodoshuru onna tachi no kai*). At its inaugural meeting, Ueno Chizuko, feminist academic and current 'media personality' of Japanese feminism, reviewed recent trends in the Japanese women's movement.⁷⁴ The Action Group now has working groups on the mass media, women and work, education, international links, networking, and theory. The education group has campaigned around removal of sexist educational practices following the ratification of the UN treaty on ending sexual discrimination. It has been particularly critical of the new *kateika* (home economics course), on the grounds that although both boys and girls must take it at middle-school level, it may perpetuate sexist stereotypes and link up with the ideology of the 'Japanese-style welfare state'.

The mass media group is concentrating on the issue of pornography. A public meeting in February 1987 considered this issue from both an ideological and economic standpoint.⁷⁵ Some speakers considered pornography as an expression of derogatory attitudes towards women in Japanese society, while others focused on the economic structure of

⁷¹ Interview with the author, January 1987

⁷² *Ajwa to Jansu Kaiko* 17, March 1986

⁷³ Matsui Yayori, 'Josei no tachiwa kara mita "kaihatu" to wa nani ka', *Ajwa to Jansu Kaiko* 18, 1987, p. 1

⁷⁴ Ueno Chizuko, 'Feminizumu—Nihon no undo no kore kara', *Kodoshuru Onna* 9, December 1986.

⁷⁵ Kodoruru Kai, *Rassha Ajwa wa Poruno Ajwa?*, 1 February 1987. Meeting held at Kinro Fukushi Kaikan, Tokyo

the pornography industry. The participants ranged from high-school students to elderly women, with several nationalities present—which suggests that a broad spectrum of women feel that this issue affects them directly. It is also possible to link the pornography issue with a pervasive attitude of violence towards women in Japanese society, as I have argued elsewhere.⁷⁶ This includes not only domestic violence, but also various forms of psychological violence, and the violence of unnecessary medical procedures, as exemplified in the Fujimi Byoin scandal.⁷⁷

One trend of the 1980s which has intensified in recent years is the cooperation of several women's groups—often together with consumers' and citizens' groups—in coalitions around a particular issue that require coordinated national activity. It has often been suggested that citizens' movements in Japan are fragmented, divided and ineffective.⁷⁸ Thanks to the women's movement, however, there has been a recent trend towards the linking of seemingly disparate issues in a coherent critique of the masculinist, militarist nature of the modern Japanese state. This became apparent in campaigns against changes to the abortion law in 1982, and recent campaigns on the Equal Opportunity Act brought together a coalition of 48 groups.⁷⁹

In 1982 Murakami Masakuni (Diet member and leader of the right-wing religious and political group *Seicho no Ie*) led a new campaign for the removal of the 'economic reasons' clause in the abortion law, using propaganda from the Moral Majority in America and inviting Mother Theresa to Japan.⁸⁰ The 1982 campaign against Murakami and the proposed amendment was coordinated by a coalition of over seventy groups (*Sosbiren*), including anti-War, anti-pollution and anti-nuclear groups and organizations supporting the rights of the handicapped. They recognized that moves to change the abortion law were part of a coherent right-wing philosophy of increased spending on military expansion and resulting privatization of welfare. The ideology which relegated women to the private sphere of domestic labour also denied them reproductive freedom. The 1982 coalition met this ideology with a coherent critique of Japanese masculinism and militarism. And although the proposed amendment was defeated in 1982, women have continued their campaign and demanded the removal of the crime of aborticide from the Civil Code.

Recent activities by anti-war and anti-nuclear groups have contributed to this critique of Japanese society. In June 1983, rallies against Nakasone's military cooperation with the United States were supported by *Sosbiren* and other women's groups. *Senso o mo michi o yurusamai onnatachi no kai*

⁷⁶ Review of Ian Buruma, *A Japanese Mirror*, op. cit., published in *JSAA Newsletter*, June 1986.

⁷⁷ Several women formed a support group after it was realized that doctors at the Fujimi Clinic had performed unnecessary gynaecological operations for profit.

⁷⁸ Iida Momo, for example, notes the failure of 1960s activists to form links between the Ampe struggles and the Minamata issue. Iida Momo, 'Aka to mudo no dai go-ryu ushuru no kyowa no tameni', *Crisis*, 30 November 1985.

⁷⁹ Saito Chuyo, 'Zadankai', *Agora* 100, *Koshoku, hachiku, sashite* . . . , pp. 12-13.

⁸⁰ This campaign and the feminist response are discussed in detail in Mackie and Buckley, 'Women in the New Japanese State', in McCormack and Sugimoto, eds., op. cit.

(Women who refuse to follow the road to war) consists of a coalition of feminist pacifist activists which holds national meetings every year. Another annual event, held on the 15th of August, is the 'speech marathon' at which women occupy space outside Shibuya Station in Tokyo, their loudspeakers vying with those of ultrarightist groups for the attention of commuters and shoppers. At one recent meeting the women of Kitafuji were prominent. In Zushi (near Tokyo) women opposing further encroachment of the US military onto local land have been successful in their campaign, and one of their members has been elected mayor.⁸¹

New Directions

Anti-militarism is supported by a revival of interest in Japanese women's history. The research of the Asian Women's Association has exposed the links between Japan's military activities and present-day economic imperialism, raising the question of *women's* share in the responsibility for the oppression of other Asian peoples.⁸² Several researchers are examining the role of women in the national mobilization of the 1940s.⁸³ If women are to be seen as active participants in this process, then the next task of feminist historians is to expose the ideological pressures which were brought to bear. More than one political commentator has already drawn parallels between the 1940s and the 1980s, so that the problem has obvious contemporary relevance. The research will also be germane to recent theoretical debates on the link between gender and fascism in Italy and Germany.

There has also been great interest in rediscovering the history of feminist activism in Japan. One aspect of this is the search for role models, and activists such as Hiratsuka and Yamakawa, or the feminist historian Takamure Itsue, provide inspiration for contemporary activists. However, this interest goes beyond mere nostalgia. An examination of the writings of early feminist thinkers may expose the philosophical strengths and weaknesses of their arguments, and contribute towards an understanding of the failure of pre-war feminism to provide serious opposition against the militarist regime of the 1930s. How was it possible that such feminists as Ichikawa, Yamada and Takamure could be co-opted under the National Mobilization System? The new women's centres and the reissue of feminist classics and journals in facsimile editions have made the history of feminist activism more accessible in recent years. A reappraisal of family history may also challenge the myth of the 'unique Japanese family system' which has so often been used to justify women's relegation to the domestic sphere. Such research is supported by several women's studies associations⁸⁴ and such establishments as the remarkable Shokado Women's Book Store in Kyoto.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Inoue Reiko, 'Strengthening the Web', *Aspire* 18/2-3, p. 17

⁸² *Ajwa to Jasei Kai Ho* 12, 1984

⁸³ Suzuki Yuko, *Feminizmyu to sensu*, Tokyo 1986

⁸⁴ Surveyed in Kuminobu, Junko W., 'Women's Studies in Japan', *Women's Studies International Forum* 7/4, pp. 301-3

⁸⁵ Shokado publishes a monthly newsletter surveying publications on women in Japan.

There are signs that Japanese women are now questioning the ideology of maternalism. Aoki Yayoi, in a recent book, starts by dividing the concept of motherhood into three areas: reproduction, childcare and other nurturing activities.⁸⁶ She points out, in terms reminiscent of Juliet Mitchell, that only reproduction is essentially carried out by women, and questions the equation of *josei* (femaleness) with *boshi* (maternity). She also explodes the myth that Japanese society is 'maternalist' in emphasis, by arguing that a society which truly pursued values of caring and nurturing could not be so ignorant of the needs of the handicapped and weaker members of society. Several speakers at a seminar in Kyoto in 1986⁸⁷ called for the reintegration of 'maternalist' (read: caring and nurturing) values into society, on the grounds that such activities as parenting and care for weaker members of society are the responsibility of society as a whole, rather than of individual women.

Aoki's vision of a feminist, nature-loving society echoes that of Saito Chuyo of *Agora*. Aoki feels that a reduction of the working hours of Japanese men, and a sharing of both productive and reproductive work between men and women, would lead to a more equitable society. She would also like to see this society adopt ecologist values and reject the over-affluence and over-production of contemporary Japan.⁸⁸ Aoki herself has been criticized as maternalist and utopian. She uses the words 'feminine principle' (*josei gentri*) for the values of caring and nurturing which are missing from contemporary society, but emphasizes that *josei gentri* is not to be confused with biological sex. I feel, however, that she could avoid misunderstanding by using less emotionally loaded terminology. According to Aoki, the most pressing issues for women in Japan now concern reproductive control. She is one of the activists who continue to keep the abortion issue in the public arena, and has attempted to promote discussion of the dangers of new reproductive technology.

Recent debates on motherhood often refer to French theories of the body, sexuality and language. This has limited usefulness where categories such as 'phallogocentrism or phallocracy'—which have grown out of particular historical circumstances in Europe—are applied uncritically to Japan. There are also, however, some writers who have been able to apply deconstructive methodology to a consideration of Japanese ideologies of motherhood and the body.⁸⁹ It will be interesting to watch how this area develops—particularly in the study of pornography and sexuality.

There is a long tradition of socialist feminist activism in Japan. The major contemporary interpreter of Marxist feminist thought—Ueno

⁸⁶ Aoki Yayoi, *Beats to the name! Ai*, Tokyo 1986

⁸⁷ Nihon josei gaku kai, *Feminizansu doko i yaku*, Women's Bookstore, Kyoto 1986, pp. 84, 94

⁸⁸ Interview with author, January 1987. The problem of working hours has been raised again and again by Japanese feminists. The vision of a caring community, rooted in closeness between workplace and home, echoes Hidaka Rokuro's vision based on the activities of groups in Minamata and the alternative society.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Tanazawa Naoko, Honba Kiyoko and Takayoshi Rumiko, 'Josei, Gengo, Soro', *Shin Nihon Bungaku* 469, January 1987.

Chizuko⁹⁰—actually resists the label 'Marxist feminist', but there have also been some potentially useful applications of such theory to the Japanese situation. Tanaka Yufuko's analysis of prostitution in Japanese society, for example, has advanced considerably on previous discussion of this issue.⁹¹ A recent number of the journal *Crisis* explored possible links between socialism, feminism and ecologism; and here, it was feminist theorists who were most rigorous and critical in their use of Marxist theory. A reintegration of socialist feminist thought and activism would be a most encouraging development in Japan.

In 1986 the Socialist Doi Takako became the first female leader of a political party in Japan. Many women have been inspired by her example, and pamphlets for public meetings to support Doi talk of 'a new age for women's politics' in Japan.⁹² Doi's breakthrough comes at a time when the opposition parties in the Diet have reached an all-time low, but it would be pleasing indeed to think that left-wing political parties and groups could learn from the strategies of feminist politics in recent years.

In conclusion, there are both positive and negative lessons to be learned from a consideration of feminist politics in Japan. The whole experience of Japanese women cautions against a naive faith in legislation: the most liberal constitution in the world is useless without affirmative action programmes and support for women workers in the form of adequate childcare and welfare services. In a country where fewer than one per cent of editorial positions are held by women, they have come to rely on alternative media for the dissemination of their ideas. The various groups, including small-scale study circles, communicate largely by means of roneoed sheets. Grassroots political activity allows each individual or group to concentrate on the issue which affects them most closely, but groups and campaigns are coordinated into a coherent anti-rightist critique. Such methods have also been employed by environmental activists.

A consciousness of the history of Japanese women is bound up with an emphasis on international solidarity. Theoretical tools from other countries are used where appropriate, links have been formed with feminist groups overseas, and international pressure has been astutely applied in a number of areas. In relation to other Asian women, many Japanese women have come to realize that they too may be 'oppressors'. Other left-wing activists could learn from the efforts of feminists to integrate work on seemingly disparate issues within a coherent critique of modern society. Feminists in other countries could also profitably learn from the experience of recent decades in Japan, and above all from the powerful international consciousness of Japanese feminism.

⁹⁰ Ueno Chizuko, 'Marukusu shugi feminizumu—sono Kanooni to Genki', *Shiso no Kagaku*, March 1986.

⁹¹ Tanaka Yufuko, *Joshi bushibansha Kaikyō no Kenkyū*, Tokyo 1981.

⁹² It is particularly important that Doi has reached this position as an avowed feminist. Indeed, all of the most prominent female politicians of the post-war period have been identified with feminism—the suffragist Ickikawa Fusae, the birth-control campaigner Kato (Ishimoto) Shidzue, and the Socialist Tanaka Sumiko.

Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination

We Brazilians and other Latin Americans constantly experience the artificial, inauthentic and imitative nature of our cultural life. An essential element in our critical thought since independence, it has been variously interpreted from romantic, naturalist, modernist, right-wing, left-wing, cosmopolitan and nationalist points of view, so we may suppose that the problem is enduring and deeply rooted. Before attempting another explanation, let us assume that this malaise is a fact. Its everyday manifestations range from the inoffensive to the horrifying. Examples of inappropriateness include Father Christmas sporting an eskimo outfit in a tropical climate and, for traditionalists, the electric guitar in the land of samba. Representatives of the 1964 dictatorship often used to say that Brazil was not ready for democracy, that it would be out place here. In the nineteenth century people spoke of the gulf between the empire's liberal façade, copied from the British parliamentary system, and the actual reality of the system of labour, which was slavery. In his 'Lundí do Escritor Difícil' Mario de Andrade¹ ridiculed his fellow

countryman whose knowledge spanned only foreign matters. Recently, when the São Paulo state government extended its human rights policy to the prisons, there were demonstrations of popular discontent at the idea that such guarantees should be introduced inside prisons when so many people did not enjoy them outside. In this perspective even human rights seem spurious in Brazil. These examples, taken from unrelated spheres and presupposing incompatible points of view, show how widespread the problem is. They all involve the same sense of contradiction between the real Brazil and the ideological prestige of the countries used as models.²

Let us examine the problem from a literary point of view. In twenty years of teaching the subject I have witnessed a transition in literary criticism from impressionism, through positivist historiography, American New Criticism, stylistics, Marxism, phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, and now Reception theories. The list is impressive and demonstrates our university's efforts to overcome provincialism. But it is easy to see that the change from one school of thought to another rarely arises from the exhaustion of a particular project; usually it expresses the high regard that Brazilians feel for the newest doctrine from America or Europe. A deceptive impression of change is therefore created, a development with no inner necessity and therefore no value. The thirst for terminological and doctrinal novelty prevails over the labour of extending knowledge and is another illustration of the imitative nature of our cultural life. We shall see that the problem has not been correctly posed, although we may start by accepting its relative validity.

Starting from Scratch

In Brazil intellectual life seems to start from scratch with each generation.³ The hankering for the advanced countries' latest products nearly always has as its reverse side a lack of interest in the work of the previous generation of Brazilian writers, and results in a lack of intellectual continuity. As Machado de Assis noted in 1879: 'A foreign impetus determines the direction of movement.' What is the meaning of this passing over of the internal impulse which is much less inevitable than it was then? You do not have to be a traditionalist or believe in an impossible intellectual autarchy to recognize the difficulties. There is a lack of conviction, both in the constantly changing theories and in their relationship to the movement of society as a whole. As a result little importance is attached to work itself or to the object of investigation. Outstanding analyses and research on the country's culture are periodically cut short and problems that have been identified and tackled with great difficulty are not developed as they deserve. This bias is negatively confirmed by the stature of such few outstanding writers as Machado

¹ *Joquim Maria Machado de Assis* (1839-1908) is regarded as the greatest of all Portuguese-language novelists. He wrote nine novels and two hundred short stories, including *Epitaph of a Small Woman* (1880), *Dom Casimiro* (1900) and *Eben and Jacob* (1904), which are considered to be far ahead of their time [*Trs. note*].

² For a balanced and considered opinion on the subject, see Antonio Candido, 'Literatura e subdesenvolvimento', *Argomento* No. 1, São Paulo, October 1973.

³ This observation was made by Vinícius Dantas.

de Assis, Mário de Andrade⁴ and now Antonio Candido. None of them lacked information or an openness to contemporary trends, but they all knew how to make broad and critical use of their predecessors' work, which they regarded not as dead weight but as a dynamic and unfinished element underlying present-day contradictions.

It is not a question of continuity for the sake of it. We have to identify a set of real, specific problems—with their own historical insertion and duration—which can draw together existing forces and allow fresh advances to be made. With all due respect to the theoreticians we study in our faculty, I believe we would do better to devote ourselves to a critical assessment of the ideas put forward by Silvio Romero,⁵ Oswald and Mário de Andrade, Antonio Candido, the concretists and the CPCs.⁶ A certain degree of cultural density arises out of alliances or disagreements between scientific disciplines, artistic, social and political groups, without which the idea of breaking away in pursuit of the new becomes meaningless. We should bear in mind that to many Latin Americans Brazil's intellectual life appears to have an enviably organic character, and however incredible it may seem, there may be some relative truth in this view.

Little remains of the conceptions and methods that we have passed under review, since the rhythm of change has not allowed them to attain a mature expression. There is a real problem here, part of that feeling of inappropriateness from which we started out. Nothing seems more reasonable, for those who are aware of the damage, than to steer in the opposite direction and think it is enough to avoid copying metropolitan trends in order to achieve an intellectual life with greater substance. This conclusion is illusory, as we shall see, but has strong intuitive support. For a time it was taken up by both right and left nationalists, in a convergence that boded ill for the left and, through its wide diffusion, contributed to a low intellectual level and a high estimation of ideological crudities.

The search for genuine (i.e., unadulterated) national roots leads us to ask: What would popular culture be like if it were possible to isolate it from commercial interests and particularly from the mass media? What would a national economy be like if there were no admixture? Since 1964 the internationalization of capital, the commodification of social relations, and the presence of the mass media have developed so rapidly that these very questions have come to seem implausible. Yet barely

⁴ *Mário de Andrade* (1893–1945), novelist, poet and critic, was the acknowledged leader of the modernist movement in Brazil and bore the brunt of the initial scandal that it caused. The language of his *Macanudo: the Hero without Any Character* (1928) synthesizes idioms and dialects from all the regions of Brazil. [Trs note]

⁵ *Silvio Romero* (1851–1914) wrote the first modern history of Brazilian literature, a work which is still of interest today, despite the scientific language of the period. [Trs note]

⁶ The *Centro Popular de Cultura* (CPC) was established in 1961 at the start of the social ferment that ended with the military coup in 1964. The movement was created under the auspices of the National Union of Students, which wanted to fuse together artistic irreverence, political teaching and the people. It produced surprisingly inventive cinema, theatre and other stage performances. Several of its members became major artistic figures: Glauber Rocha, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Ferreira Gullar among others. The convergence of the student and popular movements gave rise to completely new artistic possibilities. [Note supplied by Ana McManis]

twenty years ago they still excited intellectuals and figured on their agenda. A combative frame of mind still prevailed—for which progress would result from a kind of *reconquista*, or rather from the expulsion of the invaders. Once imperialism had been pushed back, its commercial and industrial forms of culture neutralized, and its allied, anti-national section of the bourgeoisie isolated, the way would be clear for the flowering of national culture, which had been *distorted by these elements as by an alien body*. This correct emphasis on the mechanisms of US domination served to mythologize the Brazilian community as object of patriotic fervour, whereas a class analysis would have made this much more problematic. Here a qualification is necessary: such ideas reached their height in the period of the Goulart government, when extraordinary events, which brought about experimentation and democratic realignments on a large scale, were taking place. The period cannot be reduced to the inconsistencies of its self-image—indicative though they are of the illusion inherent in populist nationalism that the outside world is the source of all evil.

In 1964 the right-wing nationalists branded Marxism as an alien influence, perhaps imagining that fascism was a Brazilian invention. But over and above their differences, the two nationalist tendencies were alike in hoping to find their goal by eliminating anything that was not indigenous. The residue would be the essence of Brazil. The same illusion was popular in the last century, but at that time the new national culture owed more to diversification of the European models than to exclusion of the Portuguese. Opponents of the romantic-liberal distortion of Brazilian society did not arrive at the authentic country, since once French and English imports had been rooted out, the colonial order was restored. And that was a Portuguese creation. The paradox of this kind of purism is apparent in the person of Policarpo Quaresma, whose quest for authenticity led him to write in Tupi, a language foreign to him. The same goes for Antonio Callado's *Quarup*, in which the real Brazil is found not in the colonial past—as suggested by Lima Barreto's hero—but in the heart of the interior, far from the Atlantic coast with its overseas contacts. A group of characters mark the centre of the country on a map and go off in search of it. After innumerable adventures they reach their destination, where they find . . . an ants' nest.

The New Anti-Nationalism

The standard US models that arrived with the new communications networks were regarded by the nationalists as an unwelcome foreign presence. The next generation, however, already breathing naturally in this air, considered nationalism to be archaic and provincial. For the first time, as far as I know, the idea spread that it was a worthless enterprise to defend national characteristics against imperialist uniformity. The culture industry would cure the sickness of Brazilian culture—at least for those who were willing to delude themselves.

In the 1960s nationalism also came under fire from those who thought of themselves as politically and artistically more advanced. Their views are now being taken up in the context of international mass media, only

this time without the elements of class struggle and anti-imperialism. In this 'world' environment of uniform mythology, the struggle to establish an 'authentic' culture appears as a relic from the past. Its illusory nature becomes evident, and it seems a provincial phenomenon associated with archaic forms of oppression. The argument is irrefutable, but it must be said that in the new context an emphasis on the international dimension of culture becomes no more than a legitimization of the existing mass media. Just as nationalists used to condemn imperialism and hush up bourgeois oppression, so the anti-nationalists invoke the authoritarianism and backwardness of their opponents, with good reason, while suggesting that the reign of mass communication is either emancipatory or aesthetically acceptable. A modern, critical position, perhaps, but fundamentally conformist. There is another imaginary reversal of roles: although the 'globalists' operate within the dominant ideology of our time, they defend their positions as if they were being hunted down, or as if they were part of the heroic vanguard, aesthetic or libertarian, of the early twentieth century; they line up with the authorities in the manner of one who is starting a revolution.

In the same order of paradox, we can see that the imposition of foreign ideology and the cultural expropriation of the people are realities which do not cease to exist just because there is mystification in the nationalists' theories about them. Whether they are right or wrong, the nationalists become involved in actual conflicts, imparting to them a certain degree of visibility. The mass-media modernists, though right in their criticisms, imagine a universalist world which does not exist. It is a question of choosing between the old and the new error, both upheld in the name of progress. The sight of the Avenida Paulista is a fine example: ugly mansions, once used by the rich to flaunt their wealth, now seem perversely tolerable at the foot of modern skyscrapers, both for reasons of proportion and because of that poetry which emanates from any historically superseded power.

Recent French philosophy has been another factor in the discrediting of cultural nationalism. Its anti-totalizing tendency, its preference for levels of historicity alien to the national milieu, its dismantling of conventional literary frameworks such as authorship, 'the work', influence, originality, etc.—all these destroy, or at least discredit, that romantic correspondence between individual heroism, masterly execution and collective redemption which imbues the nationalist schemas with their undeniable knowledge-value and potential for mystification. To attack these coordinates can be exciting and partially convincing, besides appeasing national sensibility in an area where it was least expected.

A commonplace idea suggests that the copy is secondary with regard to the original, depends upon it, is worth less, and so on. Such a view attaches a negative sign to the totality of cultural forces in Latin America and is at the root of the intellectual malaise that we are discussing. Now, contemporary French philosophers such as Foucault and Derrida have made it their speciality to show that such hierarchies have no basis. Why should the prior be worth more than the posterior, the model more than the imitation, the central more than the peripheral, the

economic infrastructure more than cultural life, and so forth? According to the French philosophers, it is a question of conditioning processes (but are they all of the same order?)—prejudices which do not express the life of the spirit in its real movement but reflect the orientation inherent in the traditional human sciences. In their view, it would be more accurate and unbiased to think in terms of an infinite sequence of transformations, with no beginning or end, no first or last, no worse or better. One can easily appreciate how this would enhance the self-esteem and relieve the anxiety of the underdeveloped world, which is seen as tributary to the central countries. We would pass from being a backward to an advanced part of the world, from a deviation to a paradigm, from inferior to superior lands (although the analysis set out to suppress just such superiority). All this because countries which live in the humiliation of having to imitate are more willing than the metropolitan countries to give up the illusion of an original source, even though the theory originated there and not here. Above all, the problem of mirror-culture would no longer be ours alone, and instead of setting our sights on the Europeanization or Americanization of Latin America we would, in a certain sense, be participating in the Latin Americanization of the central cultures.⁷

The Inevitability of Cultural Imitation

It remains to be seen whether this conceptual break with the primacy of origins would enable us to balance out or combat relations of actual subordination. Would the innovations of the advanced world suddenly become dispensable once they had lost the distinction of originality? In order to use them in a free and non-imitative manner, it is not enough simply to divest them of their sacred aura. Contrary to what the above analysis might lead us to believe, the breaking down of cultural dazzlement in the underdeveloped countries does not go to the heart of a problem which is essentially practical in character. Solutions are reproduced from the advanced world in response to cultural, economic and political needs, and the notion of copying, with its psychologistic connotations, throws no light whatsoever on this reality. If theory remains at this level, it will continue to suffer from the same limitations, and the radicalism of an analysis that passes over efficient causes will become in its turn largely delusive. The inevitability of cultural imitation is bound up with a specific set of historical imperatives over which abstract philosophical critiques can exercise no power. Even here nationalism is the weak part of the argument, and its supersession at the level of philosophy has no purchase on the realities to which it owes its strength. It should be noted that while nationalism has recently been almost absent from serious intellectual debate, it has a growing presence in the administration of culture, where, for better or worse, it is impossible to escape from the national dimension. Now that economic, though not political, space has become international—which is not the same as homogeneous—this return of nationalism by the back door reflects the insuperable paradox of the present day.

⁷ See Silvio Santiago, 'O Entre-lugar do discurso latino-americano', in *Uma literatura nos trópicos*, São Paulo 1978, and Haroldo de Campos, 'Da razão antropofágica: diálogo e diferença na cultura brasileira', *Boletim Bibliográfico Biblioteca Mário de Andrade*, vol 44, January–December 1983.

In the 1920s Oswald de Andrade's 'anthropophagous' Pau-Brasil programme also tried to give a triumphalist interpretation of our backwardness.⁸ The disharmony between bourgeois models and the realities of rural patriarchy is at the very heart of his poetry—the first of these two elements appearing in the role of absurd caprice ('Rui Barbosa: A Top Hat in Senegambia'). Its true novelty lies in the fact that the lack of accord is a source not of distress but of optimism, evidence of the country's innocence and the possibility of an alternative, non-bourgeois historical development. This *sui generis* cult of progress is rounded out with a technological wager: Brazil's innocence (the result of Christianization and *embourgeoisement* barely scraping the surface) plus technology equals utopia; modern material progress will make possible a direct leap from pre-bourgeois society to paradise. Marx himself, in his famous letter of 1881 to Vera Zasulich, came up with a similar hypothesis that the Russian peasant commune would achieve socialism without a capitalist interregnum, thanks to the means made available by progress in the West. Similarly, albeit in a register combining jokes, provocation, philosophy of history and prophesy (as, later, in the films of Glauber Rocha), Anthropophagy set itself the aim of leaping a whole stage.

Returning once more to the idea that Western culture has been inappropriately copied in Brazil, we can see that Oswald's programme introduced a change of tone. Local primitivism would give back a modern sense to tired European culture, liberating it from Christian mortification and capitalist utilitarianism. Brazil's experience would be a differentiated cornerstone, with utopian powers, on the map of contemporary history. (The poems of Mário de Andrade and Raúl Bopp⁹ on Amazonian slothfulness contain a similar idea.) Modernism therefore brought about a profound change in values: for the first time the processes under way in Brazil were weighed in the context of the present-day world, as having something to offer in substance. Oswald de Andrade advocated cultural irreverence in place of subaltern obfuscation, using the metaphor of 'swallowing up' the alien: a copy, to be sure, but with regenerative effect. Historical distance allows us to see the ingenuousness and conceit contained in these propositions.

The new vogue for Oswald's manifestoes in the 1960s and particularly the 1970s appeared in the very different context of a military dictatorship which, for all its belief in technological progress and its alliance with big capital both national and international, was less repressive than expected in regard to popular customs. In the other camp, the attempt to overthrow capitalism through revolutionary war also changed the accepted view of what could be termed 'radical'. This now had no connection with the provincial narrowness of the 1920s, when the Antropofago rebellion assumed a highly libertarian and enlightening role. In the new circumstances technological optimism no longer held

⁸ Oswald de Andrade introduced European avant-garde ideas into Brazil. He espoused extreme primitivism (anthropophagy) and his *Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil* (1924) and *Manifesto Antropofágico* (1928) are the most daring writings of the 'modern movement' which emerged in 1922, attacking academic values and respectability and seeking poetry written in the Brazilian vernacular [TTS note]

⁹ The greatest achievement of Raúl Bopp (b. 1898) was his 'cannibalist' poem 'Cobra Norato' (1921), an exploration of the Amazon jungle [TTS note]

water, while the brazen cultural irreverence of Oswald's 'swallowing up' acquired a sense of exasperation close to the mentality of direct action (although often with good artistic results). Oswald's clarity of construction, penetrating vision and sense of discovery all suffered as greater value was attached to his primal, 'de-moralizing' literary practices. One example of this evolution is the guiltlessness of the act of swallowing up. What was then freedom against Catholicism, the bourgeoisie and the glare of Europe has become in the eighties an awkward excuse to handle uncritically those ambiguities of mass culture that stand in need of elucidation. How can one fail to notice that the *Antropofagos*—like the nationalists—take as their subject the abstract Brazilian, with no class specification; or that the analogy with the digestive process throws absolutely no light on the politics and aesthetics of contemporary cultural life?

'Tupi or Not Tupi'

Since the last century educated Brazilians—the concept is not meant as a compliment but refers to a social category—have had the sense of living among ideas and institutions copied from abroad that do not reflect local reality. It is not sufficient, however, to give up loans in order to think and live more authentically. Besides, one cannot so much as conceive of giving them up. Nor is the problem eliminated by a philosophical deconstruction of the concept of copy. The programmatic innocence of the *Antropofagos*, which allows them to ignore the malaise, does not prevent it from emerging anew. 'Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question!'—Oswald's famous saying, with its contradictory use of the English language, a classical line and a play on words to pursue the search for national identity, itself says a great deal about the nature of the impasse.

The problem may appear simpler in historical perspective. Silvio Romero, despite many absurdities, made a number of excellent remarks on the matter. The following extract is taken from a work on Machado de Assis, written in 1897 to prove that this greatest Brazilian writer produced nothing but a literature of Anglomania, incompetent, unattuned, slavish, etcetera.

Meanwhile a kind of absurdity developed . . . a tiny intellectual elite separated itself off from the mass of the population, and while the majority remained almost entirely uneducated, this elite, being particularly gifted in the art of learning and copying, threw itself into political and literary imitation of everything it found in the Old World. So now we have an exotic literature and politics, which live and procreate in a hothouse that has no relationship to the outside temperature and environment. This is the bad side of our feeble, illusory skill of *mestizo* southerners, passionate, given to fantasy, capable of imitation but organically unsuited to create, invent or produce things of our own that spring from the immediate or remote depths of our life and history.

In colonial times, a skilful policy of segregation cut us off from foreigners and kept within us a certain sense of cohesion. This is what gave us Basilio, Durão, Gonzaga, Alvarenga Peixoto, Claudio and Silva Alvarenga, who all worked in a milieu of exclusively Portuguese and Brazilian ideas.

With the first emperor and the Regency, the first breach [opened] in our wall of isolation by Dom João VI grew wider, and we began to copy the political and literary romanticism of the French.

We aped the Charter of 1814 and transplanted the fantasies of Benjamin Constant; we mimicked the parliamentism and constitutional politics of the author of *Adolphe*, intermingled with the poetry and dreams of the author of *Rens* and *Atala*.

The people . . . was, remained illiterate.

The Second Empire, whose policy was for fifty years vacillating, uncertain and incompetent, gradually opened all the gates in a chaotic manner lacking any criteria or sense of discrimination. Imitation, mimicking of everything—customs, laws, codes, verse, theatre, novel—was the general rule.

Regular sailings assured direct communication with the old continent and swelled the inflow of imitation and servile copying. [. . .]

This is why, in terms of copying, mimicry and pastiches to impress the gringos, no people has a better Constitution on paper [. . .], everything is better . . . on paper. The reality is appalling.¹⁰

Silvio Romero's account and analysis are uneven, sometimes incompatible. In some instances it is the argument that is interesting, in others the ideology, so that the modern reader will want to examine them separately. The basic schema is as follows: a tiny elite devotes itself to copying Old World culture, separating itself off from the mass of the population, which remains uneducated. As a result, literature and politics come to occupy an exotic position, and we become incapable of *creating things of our own that spring from the depths of our life and history*. Implicit in this demand is the norm of an organic, reasonably homogeneous national culture with popular roots—a norm that cannot be reduced to a mere illusion of literary history or of romanticism, since in some measure it expresses the conditions of modern citizenship. It is in its opposition to this norm that the Brazilian configuration—Europeanized minority, uneducated majority—constitutes an *absurdity*. On the other hand, in order to make the picture more realistic, we should remember that the organic requirement arose at the same time as the expansion of imperialism and organized science—two tendencies which rendered obsolete the idea of a harmonious and auto-centred national culture.

Original Sin

The original sin, responsible for the severing of connections, was the copy. Its negative effects already made themselves felt in the social fissure between *culture* (unrelated to its surroundings) and *production* (not springing from the depths of our life). However, the disproportion between cause and effects is such that it raises some doubts about the cause itself, and Silvio Romero's own remarks are an invitation to follow a different line of argument from the one he pursues. Let us also note in passing that it is in the nature of an absurdity to be avoidable, and that Romero's argument and invective actually suggest that the elite had an obligation to correct the error that had separated it from the people. His critique was seeking to make the class gulf intolerable for *educated people*, since in a country recently emancipated from slavery

¹⁰ Silvio Romero, *Machado de Assis*, Rio de Janeiro 1897, pp. 121–23

the weakness of the popular camp inhibited the emergence of other solutions.

It would seem, then, that the origins of our cultural absurdity are to be found in the imitative talent of mestizo southerners who have few creative capacities. The *patitio principii* is quite transparent: imitativeness is explained by a (racial) tendency to that very imitativeness which is supposed to be explained. (The author's argument, we should note, itself imitated the scientific naturalism then in vogue in Europe.) Today such explanations can hardly be taken seriously, although it is worth examining them as an ideological mechanism and an expression of their times. If the Brazilians' propensity for copying is racial in origin, why should the elite have been alone in indulging it? If everyone had copied, all the effects of 'exoticism' (lack of relation to the environment) and 'absurdity' (separation between elite and people) would have vanished as if by magic, and with them the whole problem. It is not copying in general but *the copying of one class* that constitutes the problem. The explanation must lie not in race but in class.

Silvio Romero goes on to sketch how the vice of imitation developed in Brazil. Absolute zero was in the colonial period, when writers 'worked in a milieu of exclusively Portuguese and Brazilian ideas.' Could it be that the distance between elite and people was smaller in that epoch? Or the fondness for copying less strong? Surely not—and anyway that is not what the text says. The 'cohesion' to which it refers is of a different order, the result of a 'skilful policy of segregation' (!) that separated Brazil from everything non-Portuguese. In other words, the comparison between stages lacks an object: the demand for homogeneity points, in one case, to a social structure remarkable for its inequality, and in the other case to the banning of foreign ideas. Still, if the explanation does not convince us, the observation that it seeks to clarify is accurate enough. Before the nineteenth century, the copying of the European model and the distance between educated people and the mass did not constitute an 'absurdity'. In highly schematic terms, we could say that educated people, in the colonial period, felt solidarity towards the metropolis, Western tradition and their own colleagues, but not towards the local population. To base oneself on a foreign model, in cultural estrangement from the local surroundings, did not appear as a defect—quite the contrary! We should not forget that neo-classical aesthetics was itself universalist and greatly appreciated respect for canonical forms, while the theory of art current at that time set a positive value on imitation. As Antonio Candido acutely observed, the Arcadian poet who placed a nymph in the waters of the Carmo was not lacking in originality; he incorporated Minas Gerais into the traditions of the West and, quite laudibly, cultivated those traditions in a remote corner of the earth.¹¹

The act of copying, then, did not begin with independence and regular shipping, as Silvio Romero would have it. But it is true that only then did it become the insoluble problem which is still discussed today, and

¹¹ Antonio Candido, *Formação da literatura brasileira*, São Paulo 1969, vol. 1, p. 74.

which calls forth such terms as 'mimickry', 'apeing' or 'pastiche'. How did imitation acquire these pejorative connotations?

It is well known that Brazil's gaining of independence did not involve a revolution. Apart from changes in external relations and a reorganization of the top administration, the socio-economic structure created by colonial exploitation remained intact, though now for the benefit of local dominant classes. It was thus inevitable that modern forms of civilization entailing freedom and citizenship, which arrived together with the wave of political emancipation, should have appeared foreign and artificial, 'anti-national', 'borrowed', 'absurd' or however else critics cared to describe them. The strength of the epithets indicates the damage to the self-esteem of the Brazilian elite, which faced the depressing alternative of deprecating the bases of its social pre-eminence in the name of progress, or deprecating progress in the name of its social pre-eminence. On the one hand, there were the slave trade, the latifundia and 'Mandonism'—that is to say, a set of relations with their own rules, consolidated in colonial times and impervious to the universalism of bourgeois civilization; on the other hand, held in check by these relations, but also holding them in check, there was the Law before which everyone was equal, the separation between public and private, civil liberties, parliament, romantic patriotism, and so on. To ensure the stable coexistence of these two conceptions, in principle so incompatible, was at the centre of ideological and moral preoccupations in Brazil in the nineteenth century. For some, the colonial heritage was a relic to be superseded in the march of progress; for others, it was the real Brazil, to be preserved against absurd imitations. Some wanted to harmonize progress and slave labour, so as not to have to give up either, while still others believed that such a reconciliation already existed, with deleterious moral results. Silvio Romero, for his part, used conservative arguments with a progressive intent, focusing on the 'real' Brazil as the continuation of colonial authoritarianism, but doing so in order to attack its foundations. He scorned as ineffectual the 'illusory' country of laws, lawyers and imported culture: 'No people has a better Constitution on paper [. . .]; the reality is appalling.'

The Spread of New Ideas

Silvio Romero's list of 'imitations', not to be allowed through customs, included fashions, patterns of behaviour, laws, codes, poetry, drama and novels. Judged separately against the social reality of Brazil, these articles were indeed superfluous imports which would serve to obscure the real state of impoverishment and create an illusion of progress. In their combination, however, they entered into the formation and equipping of the new nation-state, as well as laying the ground for the participation of new elites in contemporary culture. This modernizing force—whatever its imitative appearance and its distance from the daily course of things—became more inseparably bound up with the reality of Brazil than the institution of slave labour, which was later replaced by other forms of forced labour equally incompatible with the aspiration to enlightenment. As time passed, the ubiquitous stamp of 'inauthenticity' came to be seen as the most authentic part of the national drama, its very mark of identity. Grafted from nineteenth-century Europe onto

a colonial social being, the various perfections of civilization began to follow different rules from those operating in the hegemonic countries. This led to a widespread sense of the indigenous pastiche. Only a great figure like Machado de Assis had the impartiality to see a peculiar mode of ideological functioning where other critics could distinguish no more than a lack of consistency. Sergio Buarque de Hollanda remarked: 'The speed at which the "new ideas" spread in the old colony, and the fervour with which they were adopted in many circles on the eve of independence, show quite unequivocally that they had the potential to satisfy an impatient desire for change and that the people was ripe for such change. But it is also clear that the social order expressed in these ideas was far from having an exact equivalent in Brazil, particularly outside the cities. The articulation of society, the basic criteria of economic exploitation and the distribution of privileges were so different here that the "new ideas" could not have the same meaning that was attached to them in parts of Europe or ex-English America.'¹²

When Brazil became an independent state, a permanent collaboration was established between the forms of life characteristic of colonial oppression and the innovations of bourgeois progress. The new stage of capitalism broke up the exclusive relationship with the metropolis, converting local property-owners and administrators into a national ruling class (effectively part of the emergent world bourgeoisie), and yet retained the old forms of labour exploitation which have not been fully modernized up to the present day. In other words, the discrepancy between the 'two Brazils' was not due to an imitative tendency, as Silvio Romero and many others thought; nor did it correspond to a brief period of transition. It was the lasting result of the creation of a nation-state on the basis of slave labour—which, if the reader will forgive the shorthand, arose in turn out of the English industrial revolution and the consequent crisis of the old colonial system. That is to say, *it arose out of contemporary history*.¹³ Thus Brazil's backward deformation belongs to the same order of things as the progress of the advanced countries. Silvio Romero's 'absurdities'—in reality, the Cyclopean discords of world capitalism—are not a historical deviation. They are linked to the finality of a single process which, in the case of Brazil, requires the continuation of forced or semi-forced labour and a corresponding cultural separation of the poor. With certain modifications, much of it has survived to this day. The panorama now seems to be changing, thanks to the desegregationist impulse of mass consumption and mass communications. These new terms of cultural oppression and expropriation have not yet been much studied. The thesis of cultural copying thus involves an ideology in the Marxist sense of the term—that is, an illusion supported by appearances. The well-known coexistence of bourgeois principles with those of the ancien régime is here explained in accordance with a plausible and wide-

¹² Sergio Buarque de Hollanda, *Do império à república*, II, São Paulo 1977, pp. 77–78.

¹³ Emília Viçosa da Costa, *Do monarca à república: Momentos decisivos*, São Paulo 1977, chapter one, Luis Felipe de Alencastro, 'La traite négrière et l'unité nationale brésilienne', *Revue Française de l'Histoire de l'Océan-Inde*, vol. 46, 1979, Fernando Novais, 'Passagens para o Novo Mundo', *Novos Estudos Cebrap* 9, July 1984.

ranging schema, essentially individualist in nature, in which effects and causes are systematically inverted.

For Silvio Romero imitation results in the lack of a common denominator between popular and elite culture, and in the elite's low level of permeation by the national. But why not reverse the argument? Why should the imitative character of our life not stem from forms of inequality so brutal that they lack the minimal reciprocity ('common denominator') without which modern society can only appear artificial and 'imported'? At a time when the idea of the nation had become the norm, the dominant class's *unpatriotic* disregard for the lives it exploited gave it the feeling of being alien. The origins of this situation in colonialism and slavery are immediately apparent.

Causes and Effects

The defects normally associated with imitation can be explained in the same way. We can agree with its detractors that the copy is at the opposite pole from originality, from national creativity, from independent and well-adapted judgements, and so on. Absolute domination entails that culture expresses nothing of the conditions that gave it life, except for that intrinsic sense of futility on which a number of writers have been able to work artistically. Hence the 'exotic' literature and politics unrelated to the 'immediate or remote depths of our life and history'; hence, too, the lack of 'discrimination' or 'criteria' and, above all, the intense conviction that all is mere paper. In other words, the painfulness of an imitative civilization is produced not by imitation—which is present at any event—but by the social structure of the country. It is this which places the culture in an untenable position, contradicting its very concept of itself, and which nevertheless was not as sterile, at that time, as Silvio Romero would have us believe. Nor did the segregated section of society remain unproductive. Its modes of expression would later acquire, for educated intellectuals, the value of a non-bourgeois component of national life, an element serving to fix Brazilian identity (with all the evident ambiguities).

The exposure of cultural transplantation has become the axis of a naive yet widespread critical perspective. Let us conclude by summarizing some of its defects.

1. It suggests that imitation is avoidable, thereby locking the reader into a false problem.
2. It presents as a national characteristic what is actually a malaise of the dominant class, bound up with the difficulty of morally reconciling the advantages of progress with those of slavery or its surrogates.
3. It implies that the elites could conduct themselves in some other way—which is tantamount to claiming that the beneficiary of a given situation will put an end to it.
4. The argument obscures the essential point, since it concentrates its

fire on the relationship between elite and model whereas the real crux is the exclusion of the poor from the universe of contemporary culture.

5. Its implicit solution is that the dominant class should reform itself and give up imitation. We have argued, on the contrary, that the answer lies in the workers gaining access to the terms of contemporary life, so that they can re-define them through their own initiative. This, indeed, would be a concrete definition of democracy in Brazil.

6. A copy refers to a prior original existing elsewhere, of which it is an inferior reflection. Such deprecation often corresponds to the self-consciousness of Latin American elites, who attach mythical solidity—in the form of regional intellectual specialization—to the economic, technological and political inequalities of the international order. The authentic and the creative are to the imitative what the advanced countries are to the backward. But one cannot solve the problem by going to the opposite extreme. As we have seen, philosophical objections to the concept of originality tend to regard as non-existent a real problem that it is absurd to dismiss. Cultural history has to be set in the world perspective of the economics and culture of the left, which attempt to explain our 'backwardness' as part of the contemporary history of capital and *its advances*.¹⁴ Seen in terms of the copy, the anachronistic juxtaposition of forms of modern civilization and realities originating in the colonial period is a mode of non-being or even a humiliatingly imperfect realization of a model situated elsewhere. Dialectical criticism, on the other hand, investigates the same anachronism and seeks to draw out a figure of the modern world, set on a course that is either full of promise, grotesque or catastrophic.

7. The idea of the copy that we have been discussing counterposes national and foreign, original and imitative. These are unreal oppositions which do not allow us to see the share of the foreign in the nationally specific, of the imitative in the original and of the original in the imitative. (In a key study, Paulo Emilio Salles Gomez refers to our 'creative lack of competence in copying'.¹⁵) If we are not mistaken, the theory presupposes three elements—a Brazilian subject, reality of the country, civilization of the advanced nations—such that the third helps the first to forget the second. This schema is also unreal, and it obscures the organized, cumulative nature of the process, the potent strength even of bad tradition, and the power relations, both national and international, that are in play. Whatever its unacceptable aspects—unacceptable for whom?—Brazilian cultural life has elements of dynamism which display both originality and lack of originality. Copying is not a false problem, so long as we treat it pragmatically, from an aesthetic and political point of view freed from the mythical requirement of creation *ex nihilo*.

Translated by Linda Briggs

¹⁴ See Celso Furtado, *A Pré-Revolução Brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro 1962, and Fernando H. Cardoso, *Empresário industrial e desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil*, São Paulo 1964.

¹⁵ Paulo Emilio Salles Gomez, 'Cinema: trajetória no subdesenvolvimento', *Argumento* No. 1, October 1973.

The Bourgeois(ie) as Concept and Reality

Définir le bourgeois? Nous ne sommes pas d'accord.

Ernest Labrousse (1955)

In the mythology of the modern world, the quintessential protagonist is the bourgeois.* Hero for some, villain for others, the inspiration or lure for most, he has been the shaper of the present and the destroyer of the past. In English, we tend to avoid the term 'bourgeois', preferring in general the locution 'middle class' (or classes). It is a small irony that despite the vaunted individualism of Anglo-Saxon thought, there is no convenient singular form for 'middle class(es)'. We are told by the linguists that the term appeared for the first time in Latin form, *burgensis*, in 1007 and is recorded in French as *bourgeois* as of 1100. It originally designated the inhabitant of a *bourg*, an urban area, but an inhabitant who was 'free'.¹ Free, however, from what? Free from the obligations that were the social cement and the economic nexus of a feudal system. The bourgeois was *not* a peasant or serf, but he was also *not* a noble.

Thus, from the start there was both an anomaly and an ambiguity. The anomaly was that there was no logical place for the bourgeois in the hierarchical structure and value-system of feudalism with its classical three orders, themselves only becoming crystallized at the very moment that the concept of 'bourgeois' was being born.² And the ambiguity was that bourgeois was then (as it remains today) both a term of honour and a term of scorn, a compliment and a reproach. Louis XI, it is said, took pride in the honorific 'bourgeois of Berne'.³ But Molière wrote his scathing satire on 'le bourgeois gentilhomme', and Flaubert said: 'J'appelle bourgeois quiconque pense basement.'

Because this medieval bourgeois was neither lord nor peasant, he came eventually to be thought of as a member of an intermediary class, that is, a middle class. And thereby commenced another ambiguity. Were all urban-dwellers bourgeois, or only some? Was the artisan a bourgeois, or only a petty bourgeois, or not a bourgeois at all? As the term came to be used, it was in practice identified with a certain level of income—that of being well off—which implied both the possibilities of consumption (style of life) and the possibilities of investment (capital).

It is along these two axes—consumption and capital—that the usage developed. On the one hand, the style of life of a bourgeois could be contrasted with that of either the noble or the peasant/artisan. Vis-à-vis the peasant/artisan, a bourgeois style of life implied comfort, manners, cleanliness. But vis-à-vis the noble, it implied a certain absence of true luxury and a certain awkwardness of social behaviour (viz. the idea of the *mondeain riche*). Much later, when urban life became richer and more complex, the style of life of a bourgeois could also be set against that of an artist or an intellectual, representing order, social convention, sobriety and dullness in contrast to all that was seen as spontaneous, freer, gayer, more intelligent, eventually what we today call 'counter-cultural'. Finally, capitalist development made possible the adoption of a pseudo-bourgeois style of life by a proletarian, without the latter simultaneously adopting the economic role as capitalist, and it is to this that we have given the label 'embourgeoisement'.

But if the bourgeois as Babbitt has been the centrepiece of modern cultural discourse, it is the bourgeois as capitalist that has been the centrepiece of modern politico-economic discourse. The bourgeois has meant the one who has capitalized means of production, hiring workers for wages who in turn have made things to be sold on a market. To the extent that the revenue from sales is greater than costs of production including wages, we speak of there being profit, presumably the objective of the bourgeois capitalist. There have been those who have celebrated the virtues of this social role—the bourgeois as creative entrepreneur. And there have been those who have denounced the vices of this social role—the bourgeois as parasitical exploiter. But admirers

* This article was originally given as the Byrn History Lecture, Vanderbilt University, 23 March 1987

¹ G. Matoré, *La vocabulaire et la société médiévale*, Paris 1985, p. 292

² G. Duby, *Les trois ordres ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme*, Paris 1978.

³ M. Canard, 'Essai de sémantique: Le mot "bourgeois"', *Revue de philosophie française et de littérature*, XXVII, p. 33

and critics have generally combined to agree that the bourgeois, this bourgeois the capitalist, has been the central dynamic force of modern economic life, for all since the nineteenth century, for many since the sixteenth century, for a few even longer than that.

Nineteenth-Century Definitions

Just as the concept 'bourgeois' has meant an intermediate stratum between noble/landowner and peasant/artisan, so the bourgeois era, or bourgeois society, came to be defined in two directions, backwards in time as progress over feudalism, and forwards in time vis-à-vis the promise (or threat) of socialism. This definition was itself a phenomenon of the nineteenth century, which thought of itself and has been thought of ever since by most people as the century of bourgeois triumph, the quintessential historical moment for the bourgeois—as concept, and as reality. What represents bourgeois civilization more in our collective consciousness than Victorian Britain, workshop of the world, heartland of the white man's burden, on which the sun never set—responsible, scientific, civilized?

Bourgeois reality—both its cultural and its politico-economic reality—has thus been something we have all known intimately and which has been described in remarkably similar ways by the three great ideological currents of the nineteenth century—conservatism, liberalism, and Marxism. In their conceptions of the bourgeois, all three have tended to agree upon his occupational function (in earlier times usually a merchant, but later an employer of wage labour and owner of the means of production, primarily one whose workers were producers of goods), his economic motor (the profit motive, the desire to accumulate capital), and his cultural profile (non-reckless, rational, pursuing his own interests). One would have thought that with such unanimity emerging in the nineteenth century around a central concept, we would all have proceeded to use it without hesitation and with little debate. Yet Labrousse tells us that we will not agree on a definition, and he therefore exhorts us to look closely at empirical reality, casting as wide a net as possible. Furthermore, although Labrousse made his exhortation in 1955, I do not have the impression that the world scholarly community took up his challenge. Why should this be? Let us look at five contexts in which, in the work of historians and other social scientists, the concept of bourgeois(ie) has been used in ways that result in discomfort—if not theirs, then that of many of their readers. Perhaps by analysing the discomforts, we will find clues for a better fit between concept and reality.

1. Historians frequently describe a phenomenon designated as the 'aristocratization of the bourgeoisie'. Some have argued, for example, that this occurred in the United Provinces in the seventeenth century.⁴ The system in *Ancien Régime* France of a '*noblesse de robe*' created by the venality of office was virtually an institutionalization of this concept. It

⁴ D. J. Roorda, 'The Ruling Classes in Holland in the Seventeenth Century', in J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kootman, eds, *Britain and the Netherlands*, II, Groningen 1964, p. 119, and *idem*, 'Party and Faction', *Acta Historica Neerlandica*, II, 1967, pp. 196–97.

is, of course, what Thomas Mann described in *Buddenbrooks*—the typical path of transformation in the social patterns of a wealthy family dynasty, from great entrepreneur to economic consolidator to patron of the arts, and eventually these days to either decadent roué or hedonistic-idealistic dropout.

What is it we are supposed to be noticing? That, for some reason and at a certain biographical moment, a bourgeois seems to renounce both his cultural style and his politico-economic role in favour of an 'aristocratic' role, which since the nineteenth century has not necessarily been that of titled nobility but simply that of old wealth. The traditional formal symbol of this phenomenon has been the acquisition of the landed estate, marking the shift from bourgeois-factory owner-urban resident to noble-landowner-rural resident.

Why should a bourgeois do this? The answer is obvious. In terms of social status, in terms of the cultural discourse of the modern world, it has always been true—from the eleventh century to today—that it is somehow 'better' or more desirable to be an aristocrat than a bourgeois. Now, this is remarkable on the face of it, for two reasons. One, we are constantly told by everyone that the dynamic figure in our politico-economic process is and has been—since the nineteenth century, since the sixteenth century, since perhaps even longer—the bourgeois. Why would one want to give up being centre-stage in order to occupy an ever more archaic corner of the social scene? Secondly, while what we call feudalism or the feudal order celebrated nobility in its ideological presentations, capitalism gave birth to another ideology which celebrated precisely the bourgeois. This new ideology has been dominant, at least in the centre of the capitalist world-economy, for at least 150–200 years. Yet the *Buddenbrooks* phenomenon goes on apace. And in Britain, even today, a life peerage is taken to be an honour.

2. An important polemical concept in contemporary thought—familiar in, but by no means limited to, Marxist writings—is that of the 'betrayal by the bourgeoisie' of its historical role. In fact, this concept refers to the fact that, in certain countries, those that are less 'developed', the local (national) bourgeoisie has turned away from its 'normal' or expected economic role in order to become landowners or rentiers, that is 'aristocrats'. But it is more than their aristocratization in terms of personal biography; it is their collective aristocratization in terms of collective biography. That is to say, it is a question of the timing of this shift in terms of a sort of national calendar. Given an implicit theory of stages of development, at a certain point the bourgeoisie should take over the state apparatus, create a so-called 'bourgeois state', industrialize the country, and thereby collectively accumulate significant amounts of capital—in short, follow the presumed historical path of Britain. After that moment, perhaps it would be less important if individual bourgeois 'aristocratized' themselves. But before that moment, such individual shifts render more difficult (even make impossible) the national collective transformation. In the twentieth century, this kind of analysis has been the underpinning of a major political strategy. It has been used as the justification, in Third International parties and their successors, of the so-called 'two-stage theory of national

revolution', wherein socialist parties have the responsibility not only to carry out the proletarian (or second-stage) revolution but also to play a very large role in carrying out the bourgeois (or first-stage) revolution. The argument is that the first stage is historically 'necessary' and that, since the national bourgeoisie in question has 'betrayed' its historic role, it becomes incumbent on the proletariat to play this role for it.

Now, the whole concept is doubly curious. It is curious that one thinks that one social class, the proletariat, has both the obligation and the social possibility of performing the historical tasks (whatever that means) of another social class, the bourgeoisie. (I note in passing that, although the strategy was in fact launched by Lenin or at least with his benediction, it smacks very much of the moralism for which Marx and Engels denounced the Utopian Socialists.) But the idea of 'betrayal' is even more curious when looked at from the angle of the bourgeoisie itself. Why should a national bourgeoisie 'betray' its historic role? Presumably, it has everything to gain from performing this role. And since everyone—conservatives, liberals, Marxists—agree that bourgeois capitalists always pursue their own interests, how is it that in this instance they appear not to have seen their own interests? It seems more than a conundrum; it seems to be a self-contradicting assertion. The strangeness of the very idea is accentuated by the fact that quantitatively the number of national bourgeoisies that are said to have 'betrayed' their historic roles turns out not to be small but very large—indeed, the vast majority.

Ownership and Control

3. The language of 'aristocratization of the bourgeoisie' has tended to be applied to situations in European countries primarily in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and the language of 'betrayal of the bourgeoisie' has tended to be applied to situations in non-European zones in the twentieth century. There is a third language, however, which has been applied primarily to situations in North America and Western Europe in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1932, Berle and Means wrote a famous book in which they pointed out a trend in the structural history of the modern business enterprise, a trend they called the 'separation of ownership and control'.⁵ By this they meant the shift from a situation in which the legal owner of a business was also its manager to one (i.e., the modern corporation) in which the legal owners were many, dispersed and virtually reduced to being merely investors of money capital, while the managers, with all the real economic decision-making power, were not necessarily even partial owners and were in formal terms salaried employees. As everyone now recognizes, this twentieth-century reality does not match the nineteenth-century description, by either liberals or Marxists, of the economic role of the bourgeois.

The rise of this corporate form of enterprise did more than change the structures at the top of the enterprises. It also begat a whole new social stratum. In the nineteenth century, Marx had forecast that, as capital

⁵ A. Berle and G. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, New York 1932.

centralized, there would over time occur a growing polarization of classes, such that eventually only a bourgeoisie (very tiny) and a proletariat (very numerous) would remain. By that he meant in practice that, in the course of capitalist development, two large social groupings, the independent small agricultural producers and the independent small urban artisans, would disappear via a double process: a few would become large-scale entrepreneurs (that is, bourgeois), and most would become wage-workers (that is, proletarians). While liberals were not making for the most part parallel predictions, nothing in Marx's own prediction insofar as it was merely a social description was incompatible with liberal theses. Conservatives, such as Carlyle, thought the Marxist prediction essentially correct, and they shivered at the thought.

In fact, Marx was right, and the membership of these two social categories has indeed diminished dramatically worldwide in the last hundred and fifty years. But in the period since the Second World War, sociologists have been noticing, until it has become a veritable commonplace, that the disappearance of these two strata has gone hand in hand with the emergence of new strata. The language that began to be used was that as the 'old middle class' was disappearing, a 'new middle class' was coming into existence.⁶ By the new middle class was meant the growing stratum of largely salaried professionals who occupied managerial or quasi-managerial positions in corporate structures in virtue of the skills in which they had been trained at universities—originally, primarily the 'engineers', then later the legal and health professionals, the specialists in marketing, the computer analysts, and so on.

Two things should be noted here. First of all, a linguistic confusion. These 'new middle classes' are presumed to be an 'intermediate stratum' (as in the eleventh century), but now one located between the 'bourgeoisie' or the 'capitalists' or 'top management' and the 'proletariat' or the 'workers'. The bourgeoisie of the eleventh century was the *middle* stratum, but in the terminology of the twentieth century, the term is used to describe the top stratum, in a situation in which many still refer to three identifiable strata. This confusion was compounded in the 1960s by attempts to rebaptise the 'new middle classes' as the 'new working classes', thereby seeking to reduce three strata to two.⁷ This change in name was fostered largely for its political implications, but it did point to another changing reality: the differences in style of life and income level between skilled workers and these salaried professionals were narrowing.

Secondly, these 'new middle classes' were very difficult to describe in the nineteenth-century categories of analysis. They met some of the criteria of being 'bourgeois'. They were 'well-to-do', they had some money to invest (but not too much, and that mainly in stocks and bonds); they certainly pursued their own interests, economically and politically. But they tended to be comparable to wage-workers, insofar as they lived primarily on current payments for work (rather than on

⁶ See, for a notable example, C. Wright Mills, *White Collar*, New York 1951.

⁷ See, for example, A. Gorz, *Stratégies ouvrières et néo-capitalisme*, Paris 1964.

returns from property); to that extent, they were 'proletarian'. And their often quite hedonistic style of life de-emphasized the puritanical strain associated with bourgeois culture; to that extent they were 'aristocratic'.

4. There was a Third World analogue to the 'new middle classes'. As one country after another became independent after the Second World War, analysts began to take note of the rise of a very significant stratum—educated cadres employed by the government, whose income levels made them quite well-to-do in comparison with most of their compatriots. In Africa, where those cadres stood out most sharply in the virtual absence of other varieties of 'well-to-do' people, a new concept was created to designate them, the 'administrative bourgeoisie'. The administrative bourgeoisie was quite traditionally 'bourgeois' in style of life and social values. It represented the social underpinning of most regimes, to the point that Fanon argued that African one-party states were 'dictatorships of the bourgeoisie', of precisely this bourgeoisie.⁸ And yet of course these civil servants were not bourgeois at all in the sense of playing any of the traditional economic roles of the bourgeois as entrepreneur, employer of wage labour, innovator, risk-taker, profit maximizer. Well, that is not quite correct. Administrative bourgeois often played these classic economic roles, but when they did, they were not celebrated for it, but rather denounced for 'corruption'.

5. There is a fifth arena in which the concept of the bourgeoisie and/or the middle classes has come to play a confusing but central role—namely, in the analysis of the structure of the state in the modern world. Once again, whether we look at conservative, liberal or Marxist doctrine, the advent of capitalism was presumed to be in some way correlated and closely linked with political control of the state machinery. Marxists said that a capitalist economy implied a bourgeois state, a view most succinctly summarized in the aphorism that 'the state is the executive committee of the ruling class'.⁹ The heart of the Whig interpretation of history was that the drive towards human freedom proceeded in parallel fashion in the economic and political arenas. Laissez-faire implied representative democracy or at least parliamentary rule. And what were conservatives complaining about, if not the profound link between the cash nexus and the decline of traditional institutions (first of all, at the level of the state structures)? When conservatives talked of Restoration, it was the monarchy and aristocratic privilege they were intent on restoring.

And yet note some persistently dissenting voices. In that heartland of bourgeois triumph, Victorian Britain, at the very moment of the triumph, Walter Bagehot examined the continuing essential role of the monarchy in maintaining the conditions which permit a modern state, a capitalist system, to survive and to thrive.¹⁰ Max Weber insisted that the bureaucratization of the world, his choice of the key process of capitalist civilization, would never be feasible at the very top of the

⁸ F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York 1964, pp. 121–63.

⁹ K. Marx, F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* [1848], New York 1948.

¹⁰ W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution* [1867], London 1964.

political system.¹¹ And Joseph Schumpeter asserted that, since in effect the bourgeoisie was incapable of heeding the warnings of Bagehot, the edifice of rule must inevitably crumble. The bourgeoisie, by insisting on ruling, would bring about its own demise.¹² All three were arguing that the equation of bourgeois economy and bourgeois state was not as simple as it looked.

In the corner of the Marxists, the theory of the state, of the class basis of the (bourgeois) state, has been one of the most thorny issues of the last thirty years, most notably in the debates between Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband.¹³ The phrase, the 'relative autonomy of the state', has become a cliché enjoying wide nominal support. What does it refer to, if not the fact that there now are acknowledged to be so many versions of 'bourgeoisie' or 'middle classes' that it is hard to argue that any one of them actually controls the state in the direct mode of the Marxist aphorism? Nor does the combination of them seem to add up to a single class or group.

The Concept Reconsidered

Thus the concept, bourgeois, as it has come down to us from its medieval beginnings through its avatars in the Europe of the *Ancien Régime* and then of nineteenth-century industrialism, seems to be difficult to use with clarity when talking about the twentieth-century world. It seems even harder to use it as an Ariadne's thread to interpret the historical development of the modern world. Yet no one seems ready to discard the concept entirely. I know of no serious historical interpretation of this modern world of ours in which the concept of the bourgeoisie, or alternatively of the middle classes, is absent. And for good reason. It is hard to tell a story without its main protagonist. Still, when a concept shows a persistent ill fit with reality—and in all the major competing ideological interpretations of this reality—it is perhaps time to review the concept and reassess what really are its essential features.

Let me begin by noting another curious piece of intellectual history. We are all very conscious that the proletariat, or if you will, waged workers, have not simply been historically there, that they have in fact been created over time. Once upon a time, most of the world's labour were rural agricultural producers, receiving income in many different forms but rarely in the form of wages. Today, a large (and ever larger) part of the world's workforce is urban and much of it receives income in the form of wages. This shift is called by some 'proletarianization', by others the 'making of the working class'.¹⁴ There are many theories about this process; it is the subject of much study.

We are also aware, but it is less salient to most of us, that the percentage

¹¹ M. Weber, *Economy and Society* [1922], III, New York 1968, e.g. pp. 1403–05.

¹² J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York 1942, Chapter 12.

¹³ R. Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, London 1969; N. Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* [1968], NLB, London 1973; and see the debate in *New Left Review* 58, 59, 82 and 95.

¹⁴ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, revised edition, London 1968.

of persons who might be called bourgeois (in one definition or another) is far greater today than previously, and has no doubt augmented steadily since perhaps the eleventh century, and certainly since the sixteenth. And yet, to my knowledge, virtually no one speaks of 'bourgeoisification' as a parallel process to 'proletarianization'. Nor does anyone write a book on the making of the bourgeoisie; rather they write books on '*les bourgeois conquérants*'.¹⁵ It is as though the bourgeoisie were a given, and therefore acted upon others: upon the aristocracy, upon the state, upon the workers. It seems not to have origins, but to emerge full-grown out of the head of Zeus.

Our nostrils should flair at such an obvious *deus ex machina*—and a veritable *deus ex machina* it has been. For the single most important use of the concept, the bourgeoisie/the middle classes, has been in explaining the origins of the modern world. Once upon a time, so the myth is recited, there was feudalism, or a non-commercial, non-specialized economy. There were lords and there were peasants. There were also (but was it by chance alone?) a few urban burghers who produced and traded through the market. The middle classes rose, expanded the realm of monetary transaction, and unleashed thereby the wonders of the modern world. Or, with slightly different wording but essentially the same idea, the bourgeoisie did not only rise (in the economic arena) but subsequently rose up (in the political arena) to overthrow the formerly dominant aristocracy. In this myth, the bourgeoisie/middle classes must be a given in order for the myth to make sense. An analysis of the historical formation of this bourgeoisie would inevitably place in doubt the explanatory coherence of the myth. And so it has not been done, or not been done very much.

The reification of an existential actor, the urban burgher of the late Middle Ages, into an unexamined essence, the bourgeois—that bourgeois who conquers the modern world—goes hand in hand with a mystification about his psychology or his ideology. This bourgeois is supposed to be an 'individualist'. Once again, notice the concordance of conservatives, liberals and Marxists. All three schools of thought have asserted that, unlike in past epochs (and, for Marxists in particular, unlike in future ones), there exists a major social actor, the bourgeois entrepreneur, who looks out for himself and himself alone. He feels no social commitment, knows no (or few) social constraints, is always pursuing a Benthamite calculus of pleasure and pain. The nineteenth-century liberals defined this as the exercise of freedom and argued that, a little mysteriously, if everyone did this with full heart, it would work out to everyone's advantage. No losers, only gainers. The nineteenth-century conservatives and the Marxists joined together in being morally appalled at and sociologically sceptical of this liberal insouciance. What for liberals was the exercise of 'freedom' and the source of human progress was seen by them as leading to a state of 'anarchy', immediately undesirable in itself and tending in the long run to dissolve the social bonds that held society together.

I am not about to deny that there has been a strong 'individualist' strain

¹⁵ C. Morax, *Les bourgeois conquérants*, Paris 1957

in modern thought reaching its acme of influence in the nineteenth century, nor that this strain of thought was reflected—as cause and consequence—in significant kinds of social behaviour by important social actors in the modern world. What I wish to caution against is the logical leap that has been made: from viewing individualism as *one* important social reality, to viewing it as *the* important social reality of the modern world, of bourgeois civilization, of the capitalist world-economy. It has simply not been so.

The basic problem resides in our imagery about how capitalism works. Because capitalism requires the free flow of the factors of production—of labour, capital and commodities—we assume that it requires, or at least that capitalists desire, a *completely* free flow, whereas in fact it requires and capitalists desire a *partially* free flow. Because capitalism operates via market mechanisms, based on the ‘law’ of supply and demand, we assume that it requires, or capitalists desire, a perfectly competitive market, whereas it requires and capitalists desire markets that can be both utilized and circumvented at the same time, an economy that places competition and monopoly side by side in an appropriate mix. Because capitalism is a system that rewards individualist behaviour, we assume that it requires, or capitalists desire, that everyone act on individualist motivations, whereas in fact it requires and capitalists desire that both bourgeois and proletarians incorporate a heavy dosage of anti-individualist social orientation into their mentalities. Because capitalism is a system which has been built on the juridical foundation of property rights, we assume that it requires and capitalists desire that property be sacrosanct and that private property rights extend into ever more realms of social interaction, whereas in reality the whole history of capitalism has been one of a steady decline, not an extension, of property rights. Because capitalism is a system in which capitalists have always argued for the right to make economic decisions on purely economic grounds, we assume that this means they are in fact allergic to political interference in their decisions, whereas they have always and consistently sought to utilize the state machineries and welcomed the concept of political primacy.

Endless Accumulation

In short, what has been wrong with our concept of the bourgeois is our inverted (if not perverse) reading of the historical reality of capitalism. If capitalism is anything, it is a system based on the logic of the *endless* accumulation of capital. It is this endlessness that has been celebrated or chastised as its Promethean spirit.¹⁶ It is this endlessness which, for Emile Durkheim, had anomie as its enduring counterpart.¹⁷ It is from this endlessness that Erich Fromm insisted we all seek to escape.¹⁸

When Max Weber sought to analyse the necessary link between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, he described the social

¹⁶ D. Landes, *Presences Unbound*, Cambridge 1969

¹⁷ E. Durkheim, *Suicide* [1897], Glencoe 1951

¹⁸ E. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, New York 1941

implications of the Calvinist theology of predestination.¹⁹ If God were omnipotent, and if only a minority could be saved, human beings could do nothing to ensure that they would be among this minority, since if they could, they would thereby determine God's will and He would not then be omnipotent. Weber pointed out, however, that this was all very well logically, but it was impossible psycho-logically. Psychologically, one might deduce from this logic that any behaviour is permissible, since it is all predestined. Or one might become totally depressed and hence inactive, since all behaviour is futile in terms of the only legitimate objective, salvation. Weber argued that a logic that is in conflict with a psycho-logic cannot survive, and must be bent. Thus it was with Calvinism. To the principle of predestination the Calvinists added the possibility of foreknowledge, or at least of negative foreknowledge. While we could not influence God's behaviour by our deeds, certain kinds of negative or sinful behaviour served as signs of the absence of grace. Psychologically, now all was well. We were urged to behave in a proper manner since, if we did not, that was a sure sign that God had forsaken us.

I should like to make an analysis parallel to that of Weber, distinguishing between the logic and psycho-logic of the capitalist ethos. If the object of the exercise is the endless accumulation of capital, eternal hard work and self-denial are always logically *de rigueur*. There is an iron law of profits as well as an iron law of wages. A penny spent on self-indulgence is a penny removed from the process of investment and therefore of the further accumulation of capital. But although the iron law of profits is logically tight, it is psycho-logically impossible. What is the point of being a capitalist, an entrepreneur, a bourgeois if there is no personal reward whatsoever? Obviously, there would be no point, and no one would do it. Still, logically, this is what is demanded. Well, of course, then the logic has to be bent, or the system would never work. And it has clearly been working for some time now.

Just as the combination omnipotence-predestination was modified (and ultimately undermined) by foreknowledge, so the combination accumulation-savings was modified (and ultimately undermined) by rent. Rent, as we know, was presented by the classical economists (including by Marx, the last of the classical economists) as the veritable antithesis of profit. It is no such thing; it is its avatar. The classical economists saw an historical evolution from rent towards profit, which translated into our historical myth that the bourgeoisie overthrew the aristocracy. In fact, however, this is wrong in two ways. The temporal sequence is short-run and not long-run, and it runs in the other direction. Every capitalist seeks to transform profit into rent. This translates into the following statement: the primary objective of every 'bourgeois' is to become an 'aristocrat'. This is a short-run sequence, not a statement about the *longue durée*.

What is 'rent'? In narrowly economic terms, rent is the income that derives from control of some concrete spatio-temporal reality which cannot be said to have been in some sense the creation of the owner or

¹⁹ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1904-05], London 1930.

the result of his own work (even his work as an entrepreneur). If I am lucky enough to own land near a fording point in a river and I charge a toll to pass through my land, I am receiving a rent. If I allow others to work on my land for their own account or to live in my building, and I receive from them a payment, I am called a rentier. Indeed in eighteenth-century France, rentiers were defined in documents as 'bourgeois living nobly on their revenues', that is, avoiding business or the professions²⁰

Now, in each of these cases it is not quite true that I have done nothing to acquire the advantage that has led to the rent. I have had the foresight, or the luck, to have acquired property rights of some kind which is what permits me legally to obtain the rent. The 'work' that underlay the acquisition of these property rights has two features. It was done in the past, not the present. (Indeed it was often done in the distant past, that is, by an ancestor.) And it required the sanctification by political authority, in the absence of which it could earn no money in the present. Thus rent = the past, and rent = political power.

Rent serves the existing property-owner. It does not serve the one who seeks, by dint of current work, to acquire property. Hence rent is always under challenge. And since rent is guaranteed politically, it is always under political challenge. The successful challenger, however, will as a consequence acquire property. As soon as he does, his interest dictates a defence of the legitimacy of rent.

Rent is a mechanism of increasing the rate of profit over the rate that one would obtain in a truly competitive market. Let us return to the example of the river crossing. Suppose we have a river such that there is only a single point narrow enough to permit the building of a bridge. There are various alternatives. The state could proclaim that all land is potentially private land and that the person who happens to own the two facing lots on the opposing shores at the narrowest point can build a private bridge and charge a private toll for crossing it. Given my premise that there is only one feasible point of crossing, this person would have a monopoly and could charge a heavy toll as a way of extracting a considerable portion of the surplus-value from all the commodity chains whose itinerary involved crossing the river. Alternatively, the state could proclaim the opposing shores public land, in which case one of two further ideal-typical possibilities present themselves. One, the state builds a bridge with public funds, charging no toll or a cost-liquidating toll, in which case no surplus-value would have been extracted from those commodity chains. Or two, the state announces that, the shores being public, they can be used by competing small boat-owners to transport goods across the river. In this case, the acute competition would reduce the price of such services to one yielding a

²⁰ G. V. Taylor, 'The Paris Bourgeois on the Eve of the Revolution', *American Historical Review*, LXVII, 4, July 1961, p. 934. See also M. Vovelle and D. Roche, 'Bourgeois, Rentiers and Property Owners: Elements for Defining a Social Category at the End of the Eighteenth Century', in J. Kaplow, ed., *New Perspectives and the French Revolution: Readings in Historical Sociology*, New York 1965, and R. Forster, 'The Middle Class in Western Europe: An Essay', in J. Schneider, ed., *Wirtschaftsfragen und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1978.

very low rate of profit to the boat-owners, thus allowing a minimal extraction of surplus by them from the commodity chains traversing the river.

Rent and Monopoly

Note how, in this example, rent seems to be the same thing, or nearly the same thing, as monopoly profit. A monopoly, as we know, means a situation in which, because of the absence of competition, the transactor can obtain a high profit, or one could say a high proportion of the surplus-value generated in the entire commodity chain of which the monopolized segment is a part. It is quite clear, in fact self-evident, that the nearer an enterprise is to monopolizing a spatio-temporally specific type of economic transaction, the higher the rate of profit. And the more truly competitive the market situation, the lower the rate of profit. Indeed this link between true competitiveness and low rates of profit is itself one of the historic ideological justifications for a system of free enterprise. It is a pity capitalism has never known widespread free enterprise. And it has never known widespread free enterprise precisely because capitalists seek profits, maximal profits, in order to accumulate capital, as much capital as possible. They are thereby not merely motivated but structurally forced to seek monopoly positions, something which pushes them to seek profit-maximization via the principal agency that can make it enduringly possible, the state.

So, you see, the world I am presenting is topsy-turvy. Capitalists do not want competition, but monopoly. They seek to accumulate capital not via profit but via rent. They want not to be bourgeois but to be aristocrats. And since historically—that is, from the sixteenth century to the present—we have had a deepening and a widening of the capitalist logic in the capitalist world-economy, there is more not less monopoly, there is more rent and less profit, there is more aristocracy and less bourgeoisie.

Ah, you will say, too much! Too clever by half! It does not seem to be a recognizable picture of the world we know nor a plausible interpretation of the historical past we have studied. And you will be right, because I have left out half the story. Capitalism is not a stasis; it is a historical system. It has developed by its inner logic and its inner contradictions. In another language, it has secular trends as well as cyclical rhythms. Let us therefore look at these secular trends, particularly with respect to our subject of enquiry, the bourgeois; or rather let us look at the secular process to which we have given the label of bourgeoisification. The process, I believe, works something like this.

The logic of capitalism calls for the abstemious puritan, the Scrooge who begrudges even Christmas. The psycho-logic of capitalism, where money is the measure of grace more even than of power, calls for the display of wealth and thus for 'conspicuous consumption'. The way the system operates to contain this contradiction is to translate the two thrusts into a generational sequence, the *Buddenbrooks* phenomenon. Wherever we have a concentration of successful entrepreneurs we have a concentration of *Buddenbrooks*-types. Ergo, the aristocratization of the

bourgeoisie in late seventeenth-century Holland, for example. When this is repeated as farce, we call it the betrayal of the historic role of the bourgeoisie—in twentieth-century Egypt, for example.

Nor has this only been a question of the bourgeois as consumer. His penchant for the aristocratic style can also be found in his original mode of operation as an entrepreneur. Until well into the nineteenth century (with lingering survivals today), the capitalist enterprise was constructed, in terms of labour relations, on the model of the medieval manor. The owner presented himself as a paternal figure, caring for his employees, housing them, offering them a sort of social security programme, and concerning himself not merely with their work behaviour but with their total moral behaviour. Over time, however, capital has tended to concentrate. This is the consequence of the search for monopoly, the elimination of one's competitors. It is a slow process because of all the counter-currents which are constantly destroying quasi-monopolies. Yet enterprise structures have gradually become larger and involved the separation of ownership and control—the end of paternalism, the rise of the corporation, and the emergence therefore of new middle classes. Where the 'enterprises' are in fact state-owned rather than nominally private, as tends to be the case in weaker states in peripheral and especially semi-peripheral zones, the new middle classes take the form, in large part, of an administrative bourgeoisie. As this process goes on, the role of the legal owner becomes less and less central, eventually vestigial.

How should we conceptualize these new middle classes, the salaried bourgeoisies? They are clearly bourgeois along the axis of life-style or consumption, or (if you will) the fact of being the receivers of surplus-value. They are not bourgeois, or much less so, along the axis of capital, or property rights. That is to say, they are much less able than the 'classic' bourgeoisie to turn profit into rent, to aristocratize themselves. They live off their advantages attained in the present, and not off privileges they have inherited from the past. Furthermore, they cannot translate present income (profit) into future income (rent). That is to say, they cannot one day represent the past off which their children will live. Not only do they live in the present, but so must their children and their children's children. This is what bourgeoisification is all about—the end of the possibility of aristocratization (that fondest dream of every classical propertied bourgeois), the end of constructing a past for the future, a condemnation to living in the present.

Reflect upon how extraordinarily parallel this is to what we have traditionally meant by proletarianization—parallel, not identical. A proletarian by common convention is a worker who is no longer either a peasant (that is, a petty land-controller) or an artisan (that is, a petty machine-controller). A proletarian is someone who has only his labour-power to offer in the market, and no resources (that is, no past) on which to fall back. He lives off what he earns in the present. The bourgeois I am describing also no longer controls capital (has therefore no past) and lives off what he earns in the present. There is, however, one striking difference with the proletarian. He lives much, much better. The difference seems to have nothing, or very little, to do any longer

with control of the means of production. Yet somehow this bourgeois, product of bourgeoisification, obtains the surplus-value created by that proletarian, product of proletarianization. So if it is not control of the means of production, there must still be something this bourgeois controls which that proletarian does not.

'Human Capital'

Let us at this point note the recent emergence of another quasi-concept, that of human capital. Human capital is what these new-style bourgeois have in abundance, whereas our proletarian does not. And where do they acquire the human capital? The answer is well-known: in the educational systems, whose primary and self-proclaimed function is to train people to become members of the new middle classes, that is, to be the professionals, the technicians, the administrators of the private and public enterprises which are the functional economic building-pieces of our system.

Do the educational systems of the world actually create human capital, that is, train persons in specific difficult skills which merit economically some higher reward? One might perhaps make a case that the highest parts of our educational systems do something along this line (and even then only in part), but most of our educational system serves rather the function of socialization, of babysitting, and of filtering who will emerge as the new middle classes. How do they filter? Here as well we know the answer. Obviously, they filter by merit, in that no total idiot ever gets, say, the Ph.D. (or at least it is said to be rare). But since too many (not too few) people have merit (at least enough merit to be a member of the new middle classes), the triage has to be, when all is said and done, a bit arbitrary.

No one likes the luck of the draw. It is far too chancy. Most people will do anything they can to avoid arbitrary triage. They will use their influence, such as they have, to ensure winning the draw, that is, to ensure access to privilege. And those who have more current advantage have more influence. The one thing the new middle classes can offer their children, now that they can no longer bequeath a past (or at least are finding it increasingly difficult to do so), is privileged access to the 'better' educational institutions.

It should come as no surprise that a key locus of political struggle is the rules of the educational game, defined in its broadest sense. For now we come back to the state. While it is true that the state is increasingly barred from awarding pastness, encrusting privilege and legitimating rent—that is, that property is becoming ever less important as capitalism proceeds on its historical trajectory—the state is by no means out of the picture. Instead of awarding pastness through honorifics, the state can award presentness through meritocracy. Finally, in our professional, salaried, non-propertied bourgeoisies we can have 'careers open to talent', providing we remember that, since there is too much talent around, someone must decide who is talented and who is not. And this decision, when it is made among narrow ranges of difference, is a political decision.

We can summarize thus our picture. Over time, there has indeed been the development of a bourgeoisie within the framework of capitalism. The current version, however, bears little resemblance to the medieval merchant whose description gave rise to the name, and little resemblance either to the nineteenth-century capitalist industrialist whose description gave rise to the concept as it is generally defined today by the historical social sciences. We have been bemused by the accidental and deliberately distracted by the ideologies in play. It is nonetheless true that the bourgeois as receiver of surplus-value is the central actor of the capitalist drama. He has, however, been always as much a political as an economic actor. That is to say, the argument that capitalism is a unique kind of historical system in that it alone has kept the economic realm autonomous from the political seems to me a gigantic misstatement of reality, albeit a highly protective one.

This brings me to my last point, about the twenty-first century. The problem with this final avatar of bourgeois privilege, the meritocratic system—the problem, that is, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie—is that it is the least (not the most) defensible, because its basis is the thinnest. The oppressed may swallow being ruled by and giving reward to those who are to the manner born. But being ruled by and giving reward to people whose only asserted claim (and that a dubious one) is that they are smarter, that is too much to swallow. The veil can more readily be pierced; the exploitation becomes more transparent. The workers, having neither tsar nor paternal industrialist to calm their angers, are more ready to elaborate on a narrowly interest-based explanation of their exploitation and such misfortunes as befall them. This is what Bagehot and Schumpeter were talking about. Bagehot still hoped that Queen Victoria would do the trick. Schumpeter, coming later, from Vienna and not from London, teaching at Harvard and thus having seen it all, was far more pessimistic. He knew it could not last too long, once it was no longer possible for bourgeois to become aristocrats.

Marxism or Post-Marxism?

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*¹ and Norman Geras's lengthy review article ('Post-Marxism', NLR 163) raise issues which are at the heart of the ongoing debate on the stature and prospects of contemporary Marxist theory. Laclau and Mouffe's major thesis is that the core of all Marxist theory is based on a necessitarian, deterministic logic which emphasizes iron laws, a strict succession of stages, the inevitability of the proletarian revolution, and so on. This logic reduces complexity and leads to an essentialist view of the social and to a closed, monistic type of theoretical discourse. All attempts from Marx onwards to soften Marxism's deterministic core by stressing indeterminacy, complexity, the importance of agency, the relative autonomy of the political etc. are simply *ad hoc* additions to a theoretical edifice which, in its foundations, remains irretrievably monistic. In other terms, when Marxists, past and present, try to avoid determinism, they unavoidably fall into the trap of 'dualism' or eclecticism. Therefore

a deterministic closure of eclecticism/dualism is the grim dilemma of all Marxist theory

For Geras, what Laclau and Mouffe see as the core of Marxism is simply a caricature, a systematic distortion of a theoretical tradition which, in the works of its most successful representatives, has managed to avoid reductionism and monistic closure without resorting to eclecticism or empiricism. Whether one looks at Marx's work or at the writings of Luxemburg, Lenin and Gramsci, one finds an emphasis on the fundamental importance of structural determinations emanating from the economy, these determinations operating not as an all-encompassing monistic cause leading to total closure, but as a framework both enabling and setting limits to what is possible at the level of politics and culture. Moreover, at the level of the whole social formation, the idea of primacy of one type of structure over other structures, or to use Althusser's expression, the idea of a hierarchy of causalities of uneven weight is neither monistic nor eclectic. It is only Laclau and Mouffe's conceptual manicheism which presents us with the 'determinism/eclecticism' pseudo-dilemma.

This paper will attempt to develop three related arguments: (a) One can defend the Marxist paradigm against the idea of monistic closure not only by reference to the empirical work of specific authors, but also, or rather more appropriately, by looking at the logical status and mode of construction of certain fundamental Marxist concepts, such as the mode of production. (b) The authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* replace the one-sided necessitarian logic that one sees in *dogmatic* Marxism with an equally unacceptable one-sided contingency logic, and that whenever they try to mitigate their one-sidedness they are led to dualism/eclecticism. (c) Contrary to Geras's position, there is a type of reductionism which is inherent in all Marxist discourse—although this reductionism is not as incapacitating as Laclau and Mouffe imply.

First of all, however, I would like very briefly to comment on some preliminary remarks in Geras's article which might create a certain confusion for the reader. At the beginning of his article Geras attempts, in a general way, to explain the recent trend of Marxists breaking with Marxism in terms of such considerations as 'pressures of age and professional status', 'the lure of intellectual fashion', 'the desire for recognition and originality', the wish to be an 'up-to-the-minute thinker', etc. Although he is careful not to link these remarks with the position adopted by Laclau and Mouffe, given that they immediately precede Geras's criticism of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, it is easy for the reader to assume that they are directly addressed to its authors. Two points are therefore in order. First, having followed quite closely Laclau and Mouffe's intellectual trajectory as well as their principled involvement in politics, I would like to emphasize at the outset that Geras's 'sociology of knowledge' remarks by no means apply to them. Second, and most important, what is really crucial in the context of a debate such as this is less to ascertain the reasons, conscious or uncon-

¹ E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London 1985. This article was written before their reply to Norman Geras appeared in NLR.

scious, behind an author's break with Marxism and more to establish the cognitive validity or non-validity of what he or she has to say.

I. Core Marxism: Closed or Open?

Moving now to my first main argument, I think that in order to deal with the issue of whether or not Marxism leads to a closed discourse, one has to start by distinguishing as clearly as possible a substantive theory from a conceptual framework—the latter, rather than providing a set of empirically verifiable and knowledge-producing statements on some specific issue, simply ‘maps out the problem area and thus prepares the ground for its empirical investigation’.² This distinction between conceptual framework and substantive theory corresponds more or less to Althusser's distinction between Generalities II and Generalities III: Generalities II consist of conceptual tools which, when applied to ‘raw’ theoretical material (Gen. I), lead eventually to the production of full-blown substantive theories (Gen. III).³

Now, it seems to me that the issue of whether or not core Marxism is fundamentally a closed or an open system can only be settled in a satisfactory manner at the level of Generalities II. For given that, as Geras argues, in the Marxist tradition one finds both open and closed substantive theories (on the development of capitalism for instance), the problem is to ascertain whether it is the open or closed ones which are more congruent with the basic conceptual tools of the Marxist discourse. Contrary to Laclau and Mouffe's position, I will argue that if one looks carefully at these conceptual tools, *and particularly if one compares them with equivalent non-Marxist cases*, one will have to conclude that it is the closed rather than the open substantive discourses (Gen. III) which do violence to Marxism's fundamental conceptual apparatus (Gen. II).

In fact Marxism, more than any other paradigm in the social sciences, can suggest very fruitful ways of studying social formations from the point of view of both agency and institutional structure, both as a configuration of collective actors struggling over the control of scarce resources, and as a systemic whole whose institutionalized parts or ‘sub-systems’ can be more or less compatible or incompatible with each other. As David Lockwood pointed out long ago, Marxism combines a *system* and a *social* integration view of social formations.⁴ It encourages, *without resorting to dualism*, the examination of incompatibilities between systemic parts or institutional ensembles (e.g. between forces and

² See S. F. Nadel, *The Theory of Social Structure*, Vol. I, London 1962, p. 1.

³ See L. Althusser, *For Marx*, Allen Lane, London 1969, pp. 183–90 and p. 251. It has to be admitted that it is not always easy to distinguish between conceptual framework (Gen. II) and substantive theory (Gen. III), in the sense that all statements contain both substantive and methodological elements. However, depending on where the emphasis lies, a distinction can and must be made between theories whose predominant preoccupation is with how to look at the social world and theories which try to tell us something we do not already know about its functioning and structure.

⁴ D. Lockwood, ‘Social Integration and System Integration’, in G. K. Zolbach and W. Hirsch, eds., *Explorations in Social Change*, London 1964. See also N. Mouzelis, ‘Social and System Integration: Some Reflections on a Fundamental Distinction’, *British Journal of Sociology*, December 1974.

relations of production) as well as the ways in which such incompatibilities lead or *fail to lead* to the development of class consciousness and class conflict. To use, as much as it is possible, Laclau and Mouffe's terminology, Marxism can help the student to raise questions about the impact of articulatory practices, struggles, antagonisms on *subject positions as well as the reverse*: that is, to raise questions about how subject positions (or roles, in non-Marxist sociology) cluster into larger institutional wholes, these wholes both shaping and setting limits to subjects' practices. In a nutshell Marxism allows the serious and systematic study of both the practice → subject position and subject position → practice relationship.

Thus, contrary to Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralist approach or to action-oriented sociological theories (symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, exchange theory, conflict theory), *subjects or agents in Marxist theory do not operate in an institutional vacuum*. Rather, their strategies or practices have to be seen within specific structural constraints, within institutional ensembles of whose (often incompatible) organizing principles agents may or may not be aware. On the other hand, in contrast to Parsonian functionalism, Marxism does not conceptualize agents as mere puppets of the system. Its conceptual apparatus is such that it leads one to look at collective actors not only as products but also as producers of their social world. Since Parsonian sociology, particularly in its macro-sociological dimensions, is based on a conceptual framework which *encourages* closure, it will be useful to develop further the comparison between Marxism and this highly influential paradigm in the non-Marxist social sciences. This will make clearer in what sense Marxist conceptual tools lead necessarily neither to monistic nor to dualist types of empirical analysis.

As has frequently been noted, Parsonian action theory (despite its label) systematically underemphasizes the voluntarist dimension of social life, portraying human beings as the passive products of the social system. In strictly Durkheimian fashion it keeps pointing out how society's core values, through their institutionalization into normative expectations and internalization into need-dispositions, shape human conduct—without showing the opposite process: how actors, and particularly collective actors, constitute and change society. The direction of influence is always from the system/society to the actor, never the other way round. This systemic bias becomes particularly pronounced when Parsons moves from analysis of the 'unit act' and 'alter-ego interaction' to the theorization of society as an all-inclusive social system.⁵ On this macro-level of analysis actors are not merely portrayed as passive, they seem to disappear altogether. When in the empirical writings of Parsons or his disciples actors actually enter into the social scene, they do so *despite*, not because of, the Parsonian framework.

This is amply illustrated by the way Parsons conceptualizes society as a system. One need only consider his famous AGIL scheme, the four-fold subsystem typology (adaptation, goal achievement, integration, latency) with the help of which he analyses the functioning of all social

⁵ See *The Social System*, New York 1957

systems. Each of these subsystems corresponds to one of the four basic functional requirements that any system has to meet in order to survive as such. The adaptation sub-system, for instance, roughly corresponds at the level of society as a whole to the economy and consists of all processes contributing to the solution of the adaptation requirements—that is, to the securing of all the resources necessary for a society's survival. These processes are often dispersed among a variety of social groups and collectivities. What brings them together in the 'adaptation' box is that they have one characteristic in common: that of contributing to the same functional requirement or system need. The adaptation subsystem, therefore, is a strictly systemic category, in the sense that it is not founded upon and does not correspond to a concrete collectivity or agency. As a concept it is radically different from such agency concepts as a dominant class, a formal organization, or an interest group. It is true, of course, that sometimes Parsons treats subsystems as if they were collective actors, ascribing to them characteristics proper only to decision-making agencies.⁶

Collective Agencies

The reason why Parsons often treats institutional subsystems or even whole societies and their core values as mysterious anthropomorphic entities deciding and regulating everything on the social scene is, of course, that his functionalist scheme leaves no conceptual room for collective agencies as producers of their social world. In fact, each of his subsystems is further divided into four 'sub-sub-systems', and the process of the four-fold systemic division goes on *ad infinitum*. Within this bewildering onion-like scheme of systems within systems, *collective* actors vanish altogether. There are simply no conceptual tools allowing for their serious examination. As one moves from the individual role-player with his/her need-dispositions and role expectations to a macro-level of analysis, agency concepts are displaced by system concepts.

It will now be quite clear in what respects the Marxist paradigm provides more adequate tools of analysis. Marxists too, of course, like Parsonian sociologists, subdivide whole social formations into subsystems or institutional parts. For example, the three-fold subdivision into the economic, the political and the ideological involves system rather than agency categories. There is however a crucial difference between Parsonian and Marxist subsystems: Marxism conceptualizes the economic sphere in such a way that its institutional components do not lead, à la Parsons, to further systemic subdivisions. Insofar as Marxism views the economy as an articulation of modes of production, and insofar as the relations of production constitute the major feature of every mode, this key concept provides a bridge between a systemic/institutional and an agency/action approach. In fact the relations of production concept leads quite 'naturally', i.e. without any *ad hoc* switch between conceptual planes, from problems of institutional analysis to problems of 'strategic

⁶ See on this point Stephen Savage, *The Theories of Talcott Parsons: The Social Relations of Action*, London 1987.

conduct' and vice versa.⁷ For it requires no mental acrobatics to move from an analysis of how the technical and social division of labour allocates agents into different locations/positions within the sphere of production, to an investigation of the type of practices and struggles to which such structural positions lead or fail to lead. The sharper the focus on the way in which agents react to their class locations by trying to maintain or transform their situation *vis à vis* the means of production (or the means *in* production), the greater the concern with issues that *exclusively* concern Laclau and Mouffe: such as the manner in which subjects' identities and their perceptions of their 'real interests' are formed, the manner in which such self-identities and perceptions are fixed into 'nodal points', or subverted by the emergence of new struggles or antagonisms. The sharper, on the other hand, the focus on how subject positions or class locations cluster together to form larger institutional complexes, the more considerations of strategic conduct are 'bracketed' and the more institutional analysis comes to the fore, the type of analysis that is totally lacking in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. By 'bracketing' in this context is meant the temporary suspension of considerations pertaining to actors' skills, strategies, forms of consciousness etc.—a suspension which is necessary in order to deal in a non-cumbersome manner with the analysis of whole institutional orders and their interrelationships. In other terms, 'bracketing' does not imply an ontological belief in the thing-like character of institutional structures. It is simply a heuristic device for examining properties of the social which cannot be grasped by exclusive and direct reference to agency concepts.⁸

Of course, the balance between agency and institutional structure that Marxist concepts encourage has not always been maintained within Marxism. It has been broken either by ultra-voluntarist class theories that end up explaining all social developments in terms of the Machiavellian machinations of a dominant class; or, at the other extreme, by theories stressing structural constraints and contradictions to such an extent that actors are reduced to mere 'bearers of structures'. But despite all this, if one considers Marx's work as a whole as well as the mainstream Marxist tradition, it does provide the conceptual means for looking at societies both in terms of actors' collective strategies *and* in terms of institutional systems and their reproductive requirements. This is precisely why historians and social scientists influenced by Marx's work have produced more interesting and convincing accounts of long-term historical developments than those influenced by Parsonian functionalism or other brands of non-Marxist social theory. Leaving aside conventional historians who tend to turn their backs on all social theory, what insights has Parsonian functionalism or non-Marxist sociology to offer in the problem area of how complex societies are transformed? What

⁷ For an elaboration of the distinction between institutional analysis and a 'strategic conduct' approach, see A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, London 1984, pp. 285 ff.

⁸ It is precisely this type of bracketing that Laclau and Mouffe reject as essentialism. For them (as well as for ethnomethodologists and other phenomenologically oriented social theorists) any reference to concepts leading to structural/systemic rather than practice/agency considerations means *ipso facto* a reification of the social. However, as I will argue below, the price they have to pay for their excessive fear of reification is the incapacity to deal systematically with the overall institutional context within which specific articulatory practices are embedded.

contributions can be compared favourably with those of such Marxist-influenced writers as Barrington Moore, Hobsbawm or Braudel? Placed side by side with the historical investigations of Parsons, Eisenstadt or Smelser, for instance, their substantive superiority is so obvious that no further elaboration is necessary.

II. The Displacement of Institutional Analysis

Of course, for Laclau and Mouffe the distinction between subjects' practices and institutional structures is a spurious one. Among other things, they would point out that institutional structures do not emerge from nowhere. Like anything else pertaining to the social they must be viewed in a non-essentialist manner: they too are the result of discursive practices taking place in a plurality of political and social spaces which are characterized by openness, fragility, contingency, and so on. However, dismissal of the agency/institutional structure distinction—which one finds not only in Laclau and Mouffe's work but in various structuralist and post-structuralist discourses—creates more problems than it solves. For either it brings in through the backdoor (i.e. without acknowledgment or adequate conceptualization) the notion of institutional complexes and the way in which they limit/enable social action; or it consistently ignores them at the price of being unable to deal seriously with problems related to the constitution, persistence and long-term transformation of global social formations.

Let me elaborate this point further. To start with, despite Laclau and Mouffe's emphasis on the intrinsically fragile, open, contingent and discontinuous character of the social, they do refer to cases where these characteristics hardly seem to apply: 'In a medieval peasant community the area open to differential articulation is minimal and, thus, there are no hegemonic forms of articulation: there is an abrupt transition from repetitive practices within a closed system of differences to frontal and absolute equivalences when the community finds itself threatened. This is why the hegemonic form of politics only becomes dominant at the beginning of modern times, when the reproduction of the different social areas takes place in permanently changing conditions which constantly require the construction of new systems of differences.'⁹ So unless one considers a medieval peasant community as not pertaining to what Laclau and Mouffe call the 'social' (which would be absurd), then their ontological remarks on its openness and fluidity obviously refer to the 'modern' rather than the 'traditional' social. And even if one focuses on the former, it is not always as precarious and fragile as Laclau and Mouffe portray it. One does not have to adopt an essentialist position in order to stress the obvious fact that, from the point of view of specific subjects situated in a specific historical time and social space, there are always institutional arrangements which are easily affected by their practices and other institutional arrangements which are not. Of course, insofar as Laclau and Mouffe do not identify discourse with language (and I think, contrary to Geras, that they do not), then I agree with their view that *all* institutional arrangements, whether durable or not, are discursively constructed. *But there is absolutely no reason why one*

⁹ *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (henceforth HSS), p. 138

should link discursive construction with fragility and precariousness—labelling any reference to institutional durability as essentialist. For the core institutions of a social formation often display such a resilience and continuity that their overall, extremely slow transformation can be seen only in the very *longue durée*, needing to be assessed in terms of centuries rather than years or shorter timespans.

Consider, for instance, the strict separation of the ruler's or the civil servant's public position from his/her private fortune.¹⁰ This institutional separation of the 'private' from the 'public' within the western European state took centuries to be firmly consolidated and today *seems pretty well irreversible*. To all intents and purposes, therefore, this structural feature, together with others of equal durability and resilience (the institutions of private property, of markets, of money, the institutional separation between management and ownership in modern corporations, etc.), constitute a core which enters the subjects' social milieu not as something to be negotiated or radically transformed, but as an incontrovertible given, as a relatively unshakable, durable institutional terrain.¹¹ This terrain both limits and makes possible specific articulatory practices, whose intended or unintended consequences may seriously affect more malleable and fragile institutional arrangements. The fact that laymen and even social scientists tend sometimes to reify a social formation's durable institutional orders (i.e. tend to forget that these are discursively constructed and reproduced) does not make them less durable; on the contrary, the 'natural attitude' to them further enhances their institutional resilience.

Now, what conceptual tools do Laclau and Mouffe offer to explore in a *systematic manner* the more resilient, slow-changing institutional features of modern capitalist societies? The plain answer is that they do not provide us with any such tools. Of course, on a highly philosophical/ontological level they do admit that contingency, openness and fragility have their limits. They talk, for instance, about necessity existing 'as a partial limitation of the field of contingency',¹² about the fact that 'neither absolute fixity nor non-fixity is possible', and so on.¹³ But these highly abstract attempts to redress the balance are rather decorative, in the sense that they are not translated into the construction of specific conceptual tools (Gen. II) for systematic analysis of those aspects of the social which pertain to 'necessity' and 'fixity'. In fact, at the level of Gen. II the only serious theoretical effort is to reconstruct the concept of hegemony and to show how articulatory practices constantly construct and deconstruct self-identities, subject positions, nodal points, social and political spaces, and so on. But the conditions of existence of such practices, the ways in which practices are both sustained and limited by the more permanent institutional structures of capitalism are

¹⁰ On the differentiation between state and royal household in Western Europe, see Otto Hintze, *Staat und Verfassung*, Göttingen 1962, pp. 275-320.

¹¹ Needless to say, the use of topographical metaphors when reference is made to durable institutional arrangements does not necessarily entail, as Laclau and Mouffe claim, any essentialist connotations. As I have already argued, the only thing it entails is a *temporary* methodological bracketing of considerations pertaining to the skills and awareness of subjects.

¹² HSS, p. 111.

¹³ HSS, p. 121.

never spelled out. The closest Laclau and Mouffe come to delineating an overall context of articulatory practices and subject positions is in their talk of 'discursive formations' and the more general 'field of discursivity'.¹⁴ But these notions are so vague and so inadequate to deal with the institutional complexities of modern capitalism that the two authors do not use them in any serious, systematic manner. In fact, when obliged to refer to the broad features of capitalist formations and their long-term transformations, they revert, as Geras has rightly pointed out,¹⁵ to such conventional Marxist concepts as exploitation, commodification, the labour-process, civil society, capitalist periphery etc.—even the dreaded concept of 'society' slips in from time to time! How are the above concepts, which Laclau and Mouffe freely use, connected with discourse analysis? The connection is never made clear, and the gap between the two types of concepts creates a much more glaring dualism than that found in the Marxist texts that they so vehemently criticize.

Socialist Strategy

Needless to say, all these conceptual inadequacies have serious consequences for concrete issues of socialist strategy.¹⁶ For instance, the authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* do not have the *theoretical means* to raise the problem of whether certain articulatory practices are more central than others and are therefore more likely to succeed in hegemonizing a political space. For them, as Geras has pointed out, there is nothing one can say in advance about the relative importance of certain subject positions, as far as socialist transformation is concerned. The justification they give for this type of agnosticism is that any attempt to privilege certain positions or practices leads unavoidably to essentialism. For Laclau and Mouffe, the crucial limitation of the traditional left is that 'it attempts to determine *a priori* agents of change, levels of effectiveness in the field of the social and privileged points and moments of rupture.'¹⁷ But what they do not seriously consider, is the possibility of assessing the centrality of certain positions within a social formation without resorting to essentialism and without ascribing ontological or epistemological privileges to specific subjects. One can, of course, wholeheartedly agree with Laclau and Mouffe that there are no iron laws of history, no historical necessity for a proletarian revolution, no 'special mission' for the working classes, and so forth. But this does not mean that everything goes, that all social movements are on a par, for instance, in their chances of playing a hegemonic role in struggles that aim at a socialist transformation of capitalism.

To make a very obvious comparison, it is not difficult to see that the working class movement, however fragmented or disorganized, has greater transformative capacities and therefore better *chances* of playing a leading role in a hegemonic contest than, say, the sexual liberation movement. The reason for this has to do less with political initiatives

¹⁴ HSS, p. 134

¹⁵ See 'Post-Marxism', p. 74

¹⁶ See HSS, pp. 149-94

¹⁷ HSS, pp. 178-79

and articulatory practices than with the more central structural position of the working class in capitalist society. This centrality can be assessed in a non-essentialist manner through an analysis of the way in which the major institutional spheres are articulated within capitalism or through a macro-historical, comparative analysis focusing on systematic structural/institutional differences among capitalist, pre-capitalist and non-capitalist social formations.¹⁸

To be fair, Laclau and Mouffe seem to retreat from total agnosticism by admitting that not every articulatory practice is possible: 'This logic of the symbolic constitution of the social encountered precise limits in the persistence, at a morphological level, of the economic conception of history. Once this has been dissolved, the overflowing of class bounds by the various forms of social protest can freely operate. (*Freely*, that is, of any *a priori* class character of struggles or demands—obviously not in the sense that *every* articulation is possible in a given conjuncture.)'¹⁹ But if every articulation is not possible, how do we assess degrees of possibility, what makes certain articulations more possible than others? Here again *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* provides no answer whatsoever. The problem is neither posed nor answered. And this because Laclau and Mouffe do not have the conceptual tools for raising such questions. To repeat, for such questions to be raised one needs a conceptual framework which guides the student to focus on the relatively stable institutional structures of capitalism and the complex ways in which such structures both set limits and provide opportunities for strategic conduct.

Given the emphasis that Laclau and Mouffe put on articulatory practices, their position is in a sense the exact opposite of the Parsonian/Durkheimian approach criticized in the previous section. For their exclusive concern is not with how the Social System and its core values shape and limit role-players' practices, but with how practices constitute as well as constantly subvert the social. Parsonian functionalism, because of its neglect of collective actors, portrays institutional structures as reified entities regulating everybody on the social scene; Laclau and Mouffe, because of their excessive fear of reifying institutional structures, go to the other extreme and analyse practices in an institutional vacuum. The unresolved tension between the institutional system and practice/action-oriented approaches to the social is not, of course, new in the non-Marxist social sciences. Over-reaction to the essentialism found in certain types of teleological functionalism (including the Parsonian one) has a very long history in sociology. From this point of view *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, though in some crucial respects different,²⁰ has a lot in common with those interpretative sociologies (symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology, ethnomethodology) whose excessive fear of essentialism or reification has led them away from what should be a central concern of all social analysis: that is, how total social

¹⁸ Such an attempt can be seen, for instance, in Marx's *Grundrisse*.

¹⁹ HSS, p. 86.

²⁰ It is different, for instance, in terms of its exclusive focus on discourse analysis, its structuralist 'de-centring' of the subject, its post-structuralist emphasis on the discontinuous, disorderly character of the social, etc.

formations are constituted, reproduced and transformed. It is precisely because Marxist conceptual tools, when flexibly used, can help the student to avoid the schizophrenic split between system-blind action theories and teleologically oriented system theories that Marxism still has something vital to offer on issues of long-term societal transformation.

III. The Relative Autonomy of the Political

But if Marxism can help us to avoid the reduction of institutional analysis to an analysis of strategic conduct (and vice versa), it is much less successful in avoiding the reduction of non-economic spheres to the economy—and this despite repeated Marxist statements about the relative autonomy of the state, the political, the ideological etc. Here it seems to me that Laclau and Mouffe are right: however the ‘relative autonomy’ of the political or the cultural is introduced into Marxist discourse, this is done in such a manner that we do have a type of dualism—although I see this dualism and its eventual resolution in a different manner from Laclau and Mouffe.

I will elaborate this point by focusing on the way in which Marxism conceptualizes the relationship between the economic and the political. At the risk of over-generalization I would argue that present-day Marxist theories put forward two equally unsatisfactory views of this relationship. The first consists of a straightforward reductionist approach whereby political phenomena are explained in terms of either the reproduction requirements of capital, or the interests and projects of the economically dominant classes. Since this type of reductive thinking has been extensively discussed and criticized in the relevant literature, I shall concentrate on the second approach which sets out to by-pass the reductionism of the first by laying particular stress on the ‘relative autonomy’ of the political sphere. Here the Marxist strategies for upholding the ‘primacy of the economic’ thesis, as Laclau and Mouffe correctly point out, are two-fold: *either* one ends up with a sophisticated monism by introducing some kind of ‘determination in the last instance’ clause; *or* one avoids monism by falling into dualism. In this latter case the political sphere is considered as ontologically different from the economic—in the sense that whereas structural determinations operate on the economic level, agency/conjunctural considerations prevail on the level of the polity. The economy is thus held not to determine political developments directly, but merely to delineate what is possible at the level of the superstructure. What actually emerges within these set limits will then depend on the *political conjuncture*—and this leaves no more room for a theorization of specifically political structures and contradictions.²¹

Now, this approach subjects the political sphere to a subtle and sophisti-

²¹ For the adoption of such a theoretical position in the study of third world capitalist countries cf. John Taylor, *From Modernization to Mode of Production. A Critique of the Sociologies of Development and Underdevelopment*, London 1979, pp. 132 ff. For a more specific application to Latin America cf. D. Portantiero, ‘Dominant Classes and Political Crisis’, *Latin America Perspectives*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1974. For a somewhat different approach which also leads to an empiricist treatment of politics, cf. P. Hirst, ‘Economic Classes and Politics’, in A. Hunt, ed., *Class and Class Structure*, London 1977, cf. also A. Cutler et al., *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today*, London 1977.

cated downgrading. For while it is conceded that economic constraints or forces can no longer be regarded as the direct determinants of politics, it is proposed that political phenomena, although relatively autonomous, are not amenable to the same kind of analysis as economic ones. On the one hand economic phenomena can be accounted for in terms of the structural tendencies of the capitalist mode of production. On the other hand, as far as political phenomena are concerned, their fluid, transient or less 'material' character means that structural analysis must be entirely replaced with the study of the political conjuncture.

Here, then, we do have a qualitative, ontological difference between the economic and the political sphere, and *this ontological dualism has consequences at the level of Gen. II*. For the 'relative autonomy' emphasis does not lead to the creation of specific conceptual tools for the study of the political sphere proper. *Instead politics and the state continue to be defined in class/economic terms*. So what is given with the one hand at the level of substantive statements concerning the relative autonomy of the state, for instance, is taken away with the other at the methodological level by the insistence that the state *must* be conceptualized in economic, class terms. It is not surprising therefore that a century after Marx's death, with some significant exceptions, Marxists still have very little to show in terms of a non-reductive theory of politics. In contrast, for instance, to Parsonian functionalism (which has generated a sophisticated, albeit unsatisfactory, corpus of concepts for the study of political development in the work of Almond, Deutsch, Apter, Nettle, Eisenstadt and others), Marxism has no conceptual armoury of this type. What we usually call the Marxist theory of the capitalist state is in fact a theory not of the state *per se* but of how it contributes or fails to contribute to the reproduction requirements of capitalism.²²

This situation creates problems. For if the state in capitalist formations is defined as an instrument of the economically dominant classes, or as performing the functions of capital, or even as an arena of class struggle, this evidently rules out the investigation of cases where the holders of the means of domination/coercion have the upper hand over the holders of the means of production, or cases where state policies hinder rather than promote the enlarged reproduction of capitalism. Needless to say, cases of this kind are all too common in the capitalist periphery, where civil society in general and classes in particular are weakly organized and where, very often, the logic of domination prevails over the logic of the market, or, to put it differently, the polity's reproductive requirements are relatively incompatible with those of the economy—in which case the latter give way to the former.²³ Given this, it is not at all surprising that Marxist analyses are much more successful when they focus on the long-term historical transformation of Western societies (where the capitalist mode of production has more or less imposed its dynamic on the whole social formation), than when they refer to the

²² See A. Przeworski 'Ethical Materialism and John Roemer', *Politics and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1982, p. 290.

²³ For an analysis of such cases see N. Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-periphery: Early Postcolonialism and Late Industrialization in the Balkans and Latin America*, London 1986, Chs. 3 and 4.

capitalist societies of the periphery (where more often than not it is the state's logic and dynamic that predominate).²⁴

The argument here is *not* that one cannot establish systematic relationships between political struggles and class contradictions or that the state in capitalist societies is entirely autonomous from the economy. Neither is the argument that predominantly political or other non-economic struggles (ethnic, generational, gender-based) are systematically more important than class struggles. Rather the argument is that Marxism, having failed to elaborate specific conceptual tools for the study of politics, *builds the alleged primacy of the economic into the definition of the political*. In that sense it is unable to study the complex and *varying* relationships between economy and polity, in a theoretically coherent and at the same time *empirically open-ended* manner.

Laclau and Mouffe's Solution

For their part, Laclau and Mouffe deal with the type of dualism just discussed in a very simple way: they reject the economy/polity distinction altogether. Politics in the broad sense of the term permeates all social spaces (there is a 'politics' of production, of the family, of the school etc.), and all distinctions between institutional spheres are discursively constructed. To start the analysis with 'pre-constituted' economic and political spheres in order to examine their alleged inter-relationships is thus, in their view, to fall again into the essentialist trap. Politics should be seen not as 'a determinate level of the social but as a practice of creation, reproduction and transformation of social relations'.²⁵ This solution to the dualism problem might be elegant but it is not very convincing or useful. First of all, the well-trodden idea that there is a *political* dimension in all social interaction—an idea which, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, is put in 'discourse' terms—is no reason to ignore or even to deny the existence, in all capitalist societies, of a differentiated set of institutional structures which have a *predominantly* political character: i.e., which are geared to the production and reproduction of the overall system of domination. The core institutional features of such a system (political parties, state bureaucracy, legislative and judiciary bodies etc.) can be distinguished, both analytically and concretely, from the core institutional features of the capitalist economy. The fact that we often use the term politics to refer both to a differentiated institutional sphere and to the 'political' as an inherent dimension

²⁴ I do not think, for instance, that it is entirely by chance that in the Marxist-oriented centre-periphery development literature Immanuel Wallerstein's scholarly work is the most representative contribution among studies focusing on the 'centre' part of the divide, whereas André Gunder Frank's highly schematic-formalistic writings are considered the most representative work on the periphery's capitalist trajectory. Neither is it accidental that there is no writer who has analysed the various developmental trajectories of the so-called Third World in a way which is at all comparable to the penetrating and insightful manner in which B. Moore, for instance, has traced the developmental routes of early modernizers. If Third World studies do not yet have their B. Moore or Wallerstein, this might have something to do with the fact that Marxist theory, which has been quite dominant in the field, does not have adequate tools for studying social formations in which struggles over the means of domination/coercion are often more important than struggles over the means of production. For an elaboration of these points, see N. Mouzela, 'Sociology of Development: Reflections on the Present Crisis', *Sociology*, forthcoming.

²⁵ HSS, p. 153

of all social situations is no good reason for rejecting the former in favour of the latter

Moreover, as I have already pointed out, the fact that the distinction between economy and polity in capitalist formations is discursively constructed and reproduced, by no means implies that it is not extremely durable or that it does not constitute one of the foundational features of advanced capitalism. In that sense it is not at all true that the frontiers between the economic and the political are in constant flux, being the unpredictable results of articulatory practices. I would rather argue that the separation between the economic and the political (in the *specific* sense that in capitalist formations the economy is 'insulated' from *direct* political control), as well as the specific way in which the state massively intervenes in the economy both to maintain this separation and to boost the accumulation process, constitute permanent features of all advanced capitalist formations.²⁶ And one can argue this not on the basis of any essentialist notions of what Capitalism really is, but on the basis of comparative-historical research into the distinguishing features of capitalist and non-capitalist formations.

If the post-Marxist solution to the dualism problem that Laclau and Mouffe provide is unsatisfactory, can there be a more satisfactory solution within Marxism? Can there be a way of avoiding economic reductionism (or monism in Laclau and Mouffe's terms) without falling into eclecticism (or dualism)? In other terms, can Marxism overcome the 'monism versus dualism' dilemma while retaining a distinctive theoretical profile? For some theorists the idea of a non-reductionist Marxist theory of politics is a contradiction in terms—since a conceptual framework which deals with the political sphere in a non-economistic manner ceases *ipso facto* to be Marxist. For others, a non-reductionist Marxist theory of the polity is possible, provided one creates new conceptual tools which: (i) try to conceptualize non-economic institutional spheres in a way that does not build into their very definition (and hence excludes from empirical investigation) the type of relationship they are supposed to have with the economy; and (ii) try to avoid economism without falling into the compartmentalization of the political and economic spheres to be found in neo-classical economics and in non-Marxist political science, i.e. without abandoning such fundamental features of the Marxist paradigm as its holistic, political economy orientation and its agency-structure synthesis. In my view, this latter position should be seriously explored, particularly since, at the present moment at least, no alternative macro-sociological paradigm deals in a more satisfactory manner with the complex ways in which whole societies are transformed within the context of the world economy and polity.

In a way Laclau's previous work, particularly his *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*,²⁷ was a serious attempt to create such new conceptual tools within the Marxist tradition. For instance, his distinction between

²⁶ See on this point C. Offe and R. Volger, 'Theses on the Theory of the State', *New German Critique*, Vol. 6, 1973.

²⁷ Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, NLB, London 1977.

class and popular interpellations and antagonisms was an important step toward elaborating, in a theoretically coherent manner, the idea that not all political struggles should be conceptualized in class terms. Already there, however, the specifically political-institutional context within which popular interpellations and antagonisms are embedded was systematically ignored: while the mode of production constituted the structural basis of class interpellations and antagonisms, the structural basis of popular interpellations was the social formation as a whole.²⁸ What was missing was an *analytic* concept which could operate on the level of the polity in a way analogous to that of the mode of production concept on the level of the economy: for instance, the notion of a *mode of domination*, consisting of an articulation of specific political technologies (forces of domination) and specific ways of appropriating such technologies (relations of domination), could, if theoretically developed, provide the conceptual means for studying the complex linkages between the economic and the political in a logically coherent and empirically open-ended manner. This type of anti-reductionist strategy which would consist in analytically distinguishing not only political from class agents but also political institutional structures from economic ones was not taken in Laclau's earlier work. And, of course, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* not only the institutional context of macro-politics but also economic institutional structures recede into the horizon as articulatory practices come to occupy centre stage. The balance between institutional system and agency is now totally broken as Laclau and Mouffe join all those action-oriented theorists whose excessive fear of essentialism leads them to turn their backs on any serious examination of how global institutional orders persist and change.

IV. Methodological Holism and Authoritarianism

I would like to close this article by briefly discussing another major criticism of Marxism which one finds in a mild form in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and in a more extreme one in many ex-Marxists who have espoused libertarian political positions; this is the idea that Marx's notion of totality and his holistic orientation to the study of social phenomena are indissolubly linked not only with essentialism but also with an authoritarian or even totalitarian approach to politics.

That authoritarian conclusions can be drawn from Marx's varied oeuvre is undeniable. It is true, for instance, that in his more positivist or determinist writings society, as Laclau and Mouffe point out, is portrayed as a totality whose essence unfolds according to strict economic laws, these laws giving unity and firm direction to the social formation as a whole. Within this scheme of things the role of human agency is minimized, since the unity of the proletariat and its revolutionary role are inscribed in its very position within the division of labour, and guaranteed by the very laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production. It is also true that this determinist, mechanistic conception of social development can easily be linked with a scientific view of the

²⁸ Ibid., p. 166. For a critical review of this position, see N. Mouzeis, 'Ideology and Class Politics: a Critique of Ernesto Laclau', NLR, March-April 1978.

social, a view which tends to reduce moral and political problems to technical ones by naively asserting that there is a single 'scientific', and therefore 'indisputable', solution to every social conflict and antagonism. The underconceptualization of the political sphere proper, and Marx's vision of a stateless communist order immune from class antagonisms, only reinforce this type of pseudo-scientific bias which has provided fertile ground for all sorts of authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies and practices among Marx's epigoni.²⁹

Neither the determinist/mechanistic nor the scientific/authoritarian elements, however, can be considered as representing the core of Marx's thought; and, more important from our point of view, *none of these elements is intrinsically linked with a holistic conceptual framework*. In fact it is generally accepted that, unlike other nineteenth-century evolutionist theories, Marx's scheme of stages—which emphasizes the importance of class struggles as a fundamental mechanism of transition from one stage to the next—provides the conceptual means for avoiding a strictly unilinear, determinist view of development of the kind that is set out in the writings of Comte, for instance. Moreover, the very way in which the Marxist stages are constructed, each one being conceptualized predominantly in terms of the prevailing relations of production rather than the quantitative growth of the forces of production, again indicates the extent to which the Marxist categories point to the importance of struggles, to the divisional/appropriative rather than merely technological aspects of social life.

The best proof of this, of course, lies in Marx's own historical writings, where classes and class fractions neither play a secondary role nor are presented as following the 'logic of capital', puppet fashion. In fact the prominence of the relations of production in Marx's conceptual scheme is a strong guarantee against technicist-neutralist views of the social. And while it is true that the 'political' disappears in Marx's communist utopia, it is also true that his major contribution to classical political economy was precisely the systematic introduction of a *historical* and *political* dimension to the analysis of economic phenomena. It was the assertion that what most economists had hitherto considered as the natural, eternal laws of the market were in fact regularities based on historically specific struggles leading to specific forms of exploitation.

One could go on *ad infinitum* debating what weight should be attached to those aspects of Marx's work that are predominantly voluntarist-humanist, and those that underemphasize agency and stress structural determinations, the laws of motion of capital, etc. Yet it is of less consequence whether Marx's overall work is considered determinist, or whether a radical break is discovered between his early and late writings. What is more important is that Marx's work as a whole provides the *conceptual means* for looking in a theoretically coherent manner at social formations and their overall reproduction/transformation from both an agency and a structural/institutional point of view. This type of balanced holism does not *necessarily* entail a determinist, essentialist orientation

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of such connections, see I. Balbus, *Marxism and Dogmatism*, Princeton, N.J. 1982.

to the study of the social; neither does it *necessarily* lead to authoritarian political attitudes. Methodological holism in itself is not indissolubly linked with assertions about the ontological nature of the social, nor with the degree of relatedness or non-relatedness of social institutions, nor with the type of political controls that do or should prevail in any specific social whole. At its best, a holistic framework merely proposes an anti-atomist strategy of investigation: it attempts to provide conceptual tools that guard against the study of economic, political and cultural phenomena in a compartmentalized, contextless or *ad hoc* manner. It provides, in other words, a language which, instead of erecting barriers, facilitates the study of the complex ways in which global societies are constituted, reproduced and transformed.

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Understanding Modernism: A Response to Franco Moretti

Franco Moretti's stimulating contribution to the debate on Marxism and Modernism ('The Spell of Indecision', *NLR* 164) unfortunately elides, in its very opening sentences, a crucial aesthetic distinction—with the result that his critique of modernism is of much less general validity than he assumes. Frank Kermode long ago insisted, in a now famous essay, on the necessity for 'a discrimination of modernisms', and it is this that Moretti signally fails to provide. His critique of modernism is thus, ironically, as one-dimensional as the recent euphoric celebrations of it that he rightly deplores, his position is the mere mirror image of that of his antagonists, Lukácsian rather than Lyotardian. And this need to discriminate is all the greater in that we now have to hand, in Peter Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, a powerful attempt to shift the debate on modernism beyond the frozen polarities of a simple for or against.¹

Moretti's slide from 'the attitude of Marxist criticism towards Modernism' to 'Marxist readings of avant-garde literature' in his first two sentences must be resisted. Except in some blurred literary-historical readings (where both terms simply denote everything that has happened since 1848), 'modernism' and the 'avant-garde' are not synonymous terms—or at least *should* not be, after Burger's book. Modernism, one would now incline to argue, is the avant-garde standing on its head—the latter being the rational kernel within the modernist mystical shell. Far from being simply another, accelerating stage of post-1848 (Baudelairean, Flaubertian or whatever) aesthetic modernity, another spiralling twist in the dialectics of 'making it new', the avant-garde movements of the early decades of our own century (the 'historical avant-garde', to use Burger's own term) are rather the *negation* of that project. The avant-garde may indeed have on occasion coquetted with the mode of expression peculiar to modernism; but that does not prevent it from being on the whole, in intention if not always in achievement, the first movement to present the general forms of motion of aesthetic modernity in a comprehensive and conscious and, crucially, radicalized manner.

Moretti points out the survival of Romantic irony in a modernism which often—and especially in its Anglo-American inflection—presented itself in militantly classicist forms. But this particular ruse of History is a

¹ Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Michael Shaw (Manchester University Press, 1984).

function of the survival within Romanticism itself of certain key structures of classicist aesthetics which it thought it had surpassed. If the progressive moment of Romanticism is its journey from the polite to the popular, from the country house to the country *font court*, from an ornately formalized poetic diction to the language used by ordinary men and women, this must be set against its deep counter-impulse towards a transcendentalism that it usually found on Alpine mountain tops. To ascend the mountain was to shed locality, particularity, specific social identity, and to move towards an awed contemplation of totality, a God's-eye view of the universal order. Far from being the committed spokesman of a particular, local rural community, the poet now stood resolutely outside it, his social isolation being the precondition of his contemplative access to totality. But by now the constitutive structures of classicism had been reinvented, no matter how many of its trappings had been discarded: from the mountain top, poetic truth was general not particular, timeless not historically specific, essential not contingent, objective not mediated through an individual subjectivity—it would, in short, have warmed the heart of a Samuel Johnson or Joshua Reynolds.

This essential ambivalence in Romanticism perpetuates the 'split' that Moretti notes between Faustian and Mephistophelean time, between an idealist realm of total possibility and the sordid, practical order of 'decision' and historico-political practice. The nineteenth-century realist novel does not so much heal it as install it in its very form: from a great height the transcendentalist narrator contemplates the follies of his characters, mired in passion, contradiction, mutual incomprehension, history. The form then drags even the 'social-democratic' content back towards a classicist order that had not, after all, been surpassed: if George Eliot starts out writing about the Adam Bedes and Hetty Sorrels, she ends up among the Daniel Derondas and Gwendolen Harleths. The English response to 1848 is represented by a Matthew Arnold rather than a Baudelaire or Flaubert; but then it more vividly demonstrates how the structures of classicism survive on into—or even generate—the modernist project. The Morettian 'split' which one might, charitably, regard as a sad, unmastered fatality in George Eliot is of course an explicitly announced principle in Arnold's neo-classicist poetics and the literary-critical discourse he builds upon it: it inheres now in the radical distinction between the disinterested, universalist 'best self' and the shabbily self-interested and divisive 'ordinary self'. The shabbiness, however, lies in this dualism itself which is, as Moretti points out in his discussion of *Faust*, a structure of disavowal. If there is, in one sense, no more radical principle of social critique than the disinterested subject, which x-rays the fumbling empiricism of English political life with the pitiless gaze of Enlightenment rationality, Arnold also builds into his system a crucial caveat which allows the world of practice and decision to run on undisturbed in its oppressive tracks: 'force till right is ready' is the judicious, temporizing counterpart of an apparently stringent principle of disinterestedness.

But in the modernism which derives in one way or another from Arnoldian transcendentalism—which I take (but cannot here demonstrate) to include James, Pater, Hulme, T. S. Eliot, Huxley, Woolf,

Forster and Beckett—this compromise is abandoned. The irony of disinterest, the project of an absolute autonomy, spares nothing—certainly not the social world at large, and ultimately not even the literary text itself. No social identity or commitment can satisfy the would-be disinterested self; the exemplary instance here is Henry James's Hyacinth Robinson, who vanishes into the non-being of suicide in his strenuous efforts to escape the toils of both reaction and revolution. It is thus true, as Moretti claims, that modernism is characterized by a 'basic political indifference', but this is a much more *active*, almost athletic mode of being than he allows, rigorously negating rather than languidly unconcerned. If freedom can now no longer be realized in textual content, nor, for much longer, can it in terms of form and structure. If the realist narrator is a 'secularized' version of the Romantic mountain top (itself a secularized version of Christian transcendence), for modernism there *are* no more mountain tops: Milly Theale perches on one early in *The Wings of the Dove* but gets destroyed just the same, Wyndham Lewis's Tarr and Eliot's Tiresias are also attempts to incarnate this God's-eye, totalizing position, and both fail. If freedom can inhere no longer in neither subject nor object, narrator nor narrated, it comes increasingly to be installed in the signifier itself, gravitating as it were from author to reader: *we* become Hyacinth Robinsons as we swivel between incompatible readings of *The Turn of the Screw* or *The Sacred Fount*, the ambiguity of the modernist signifier becomes the *only* margin of disinterest now left to us. Value is projected to some wholly other, non-phenomenal realm—to those dimensions of textual free play, detotalization and carnival of which Moretti is so suspicious.

Yet there is a self-transcending dynamic in this process, which Moretti astutely identifies but which we will have to turn to Bürger to theorize. Moretti points shrewdly to the 'connection between "possibility" and "anxiety"' in modernism which, in his view, James Joyce fatefully breaks. But that connection *pre*-dates modernism, inhering first in the Romantic poet's radical guilt at having abandoned community for transcendentalism. At this point such guilt and inner negativity are still *active* qualities, capable of forcibly dragging the poet back to a renewed relationship to the more creaturely dimensions of human social being. Later, however, as the empirical world seems to afford less and less purchase to any positive value, they become increasingly inturned and defeatist—eventually finding only a sublimated satisfaction in the liberation of the signifier. Every one of Matthew Arnold's suave recommendations of disinterest is hollowed out by a 'sub-textual' perception of the vacuity, impotence and nihilism of this ideal; every Jamesian, Huxleyan or Beckettian hero vanishes, in one way or another, anguished, into its black hole. It is this painful perception of impotence which, for Peter Bürger, tips modernism over into its avant-garde phase. Within modernism—which he terms 'aestheticism'—the aesthetic has constituted itself as a realm in its own right: the autonomy of bourgeois art, which was always implicitly contradicted by the social or moral concern of its contents, has now succeeded in swallowing these latter up through that process of ascetic involution which I traced above. But it is this very extremist purism, the sheer severity of the split between Moretti's two modes of time, that guarantees the revolutionary force of the *return* of the aesthetic to the social world—and it is that return or reintegration

which, in Bürger's view, is the defining aspiration of the historical avant-garde. To re-organize the world of social praxis, of 'decision', according to aesthetic criteria, to build disinterest, modernist irony, the aesthetic as such, back into the very life-world from which they had initially cut away: such are the hopes of Surrealism, Constructivism, Futurism.

To offer a list such as Moretti's 'Dada, Surrealism, Pound, Eliot and several others' is to effect a hopeless conflation: it is to fetishize the 'modernist', i.e. anti-organicist image as a thing in itself, ignoring the radically different social relations of literary production within which it functions. Fascinated by both, Walter Benjamin never assumed that Kafka and Surrealism were engaged in the same project; Moretti overstates his investment in the former and is silent on his interest in the latter. The difference is one of degree, not kind, of quality, not quantity; and a discussion of aesthetic modernity which ignores Bürger's intervention has, frankly, condemned itself to the prehistory of the 'Marxism and Modernism' debate. This is not to say that Bürger's book is without its own severe problems: it is an excessively internalist work, ignoring the real material histories of the avant-gardes, distilling a single essence from formally disparate, mutually hostile and politically incompatible phenomena. But it has, none the less, moved the arguments decisively beyond the sterile antinomy (realism: modernism, for: against) to which Franco Moretti tends to revert. From now on it will be only bourgeois critics, still committed to modernism's key totem of autonomy, who fail to distinguish between it and its avant-gardist Other.

Tony Pinkney,
Oxford English Limited

Words Words Words: A Reply to Tony Pinkney

'Modernism' and the 'Avant-garde' are not synonymous terms'. Tony Pinkney is absolutely right in saying so, in stressing the relevance of Bürger's book (which, alas, had not been published at the time I wrote my article), and in pointing to the terminological 'slide' in the opening sentences of *The Spell of Indecision*. I believe, however, that the reason for the slide is not conceptual (after all, it must be clear that I am discussing Modernity-and-Modernism, not the Avant-garde), but lexical in character: in Italian, the standard term for 'Modernism' is 'Avanguardia', and that adjective early in my article is probably the punishment for trying to write in two languages at once. Ironically, the Italian draft employed the neologism 'Modernismo' precisely in order to avoid the conceptual confusion which Pinkney deplores—a linguistic choice, I am sorry to add, that an Italian critic promptly unmasked as a ridiculous act of submission to Anglo-American cultural imperialism.

In the only other case of conflation—the 'hopeless list' of 'Dada, Surrealism, Pound, Eliot'—things are different. On this specific and limited issue (the structure, genealogy and diffusion of 'collage' and anti-organicist images) I still think that Modernism and the Avant-garde do overlap, and Pinkney's objection ('this is to fetishize the modernist image as a thing in itself, ignoring the radically different social relations of literary production within which it functions') strikes me, to be honest, as the sort of bombast which is turning Marxist criticism into a noisy and empty metaphysics. If I may venture an opinion, the cheerless diet to which Pinkney seems to submit himself—plenty of Matthew Arnold and *Sacred Fount*, and universal dismissals like 'Baudelaire, Flaubert, or whatever'—may have something to do with his desire for strong theoretical potions.

I must admit that in reading Pinkney I twice wished him to be right: when he described me as an obsolete Lukacsian, and as a bourgeois critic. Obsolete Lukacsian and bourgeois critic: that is the best of both worlds.

Franco Moretti

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The agreement between Gorbachev and Reagan to ban intermediate nuclear forces has yet to be ratified. The real, if limited, gain for disarmament that it represents is at once a tribute to the new peace movements and a test of the analysis which inspired and informed them. The peace movement of the early eighties had a much more thought-out account of the arms race than the first wave of CND in the fifties and sixties; Edward Thompson's 'Notes on Exterminism' (NLR 121), and the debate it aroused, contributed significantly to this attempt to understand the nuclear threat. In this issue of the Review Simon Bromley and Justin Rosenberg assess the implications of the INF agreement for peace movement perspectives, suggesting that unexpected Soviet disarmament initiatives, lent extra credibility by 'glasnost', made a critical contribution to the breakthrough. On the other hand the peace movements themselves had been largely contained and the hoped-for West European bloc of pacific states failed to appear. Bromley and Rosenberg warn that the disorientation of the European peace movements has encouraged a disillusion with political action in the West in favour of an ethics of refusal and of personal solidarity in which the specific objectives of the peace movement recede. They urge that it remains as important as ever to prepare and press for alternative foreign and defence policies within the major formations of the Western left, and to encourage the latter to play a full role in promoting the precarious new spirit of detente, since this would be the best guarantee of further and more substantial gains for disarmament and of continuing relaxation in the East. The issues now confronting the peace movements are complex and certainly merit as wide ranging a discussion as that on 'exterminism' in the early eighties.

The death of Raymond Williams on January 26th has been a harsh blow. It was characteristic of Williams that he would bring his outstanding authority, intelligence and integrity to bear on the great political issues, as he did when he addressed 'The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament' in NLR 124. Not for the first or last time he there demonstrated his responsibility in the face of the unprecedented threats to a liveable future for humanity in the modern world. He was generally in advance of the Left and its currently dominant preoccupations, both in his attention to the cultural dimensions of human emancipation and in his

concern with the issues raised by the 'new social movements'. Perhaps for this very reason he had an unshakeable commitment to socialism and a sharp perception that the fate of emancipatory struggles is likely to be determined, finally, at the core of capitalism, in its constitutive class relations. For these reasons, as for many others, his death represents an irreplaceable loss for the Left, a loss that we feel with especial acuteness, as we pay tribute to one of the founders of this journal with appreciations by Terry Eagleton and Robin Blackburn.

The complex interplay of 'special oppressions' and economic realities is vividly illustrated in Naila Kabeer's engrossing account of the women's movement in Bangladesh, where post-colonial experience, in a complex culture combining Islamic and distinctively Bengali traditions of patriarchy, have produced contradictory effects. Although the costs of development have fallen disproportionately on women, a new consciousness of women's issues and new possibilities of organization and struggle have also emerged.

Economic thinking on the Left has recently been dominated by a conviction that the global economy has undergone a substantial transformation, and new socialist strategies have been proposed in keeping with this view. David Gordon here questions this conventional wisdom, marshalling a wealth of evidence to cast doubt on the assumption of a new international division of labour, a 'globalization of production', 'de-industrialisation' of the advanced capitalist economies, disappearance of the industrial working class and so forth. Finally, Robert Browning reviews two recent books by Robin Lane Fox and Dimitri Kyrtatas on the world of early Christianity.

Resources for a Journey of Hope: The Significance of Raymond Williams

Raymond Williams and I arrived in Cambridge simultaneously in 1961, he from a long stint in adult education to a college Fellowship, I from a year's teaching in a Northern secondary modern school to an undergraduate place.* It was hard to say which of us was more alienated. Williams had made the long trek from a rural working-class community in Wales to a college which seemed to judge people (as I was to find out later to my cost) by how often they dined at High Table. He looked and spoke more like a countryman than a don, and had a warmth and simplicity of manner which contrasted sharply with the suave, off-hand style of the upper middle class establishment. He never got used to the casual malice of the Senior Combination Room, and was to write years later, in a fine obituary of F.R. Leavis, that Cambridge was 'one of the rudest places on earth . . . shot through with cold, nasty and bloody-minded talk'. I found myself marooned within a student body where everyone seemed to be well over six foot, brayed rather than spoke, stamped their feet in cinemas at the feeblest joke and addressed each other like public

meetings in intimate cafes. It was a toss-up which of us was going to make it.

I knew of Williams's work then only vaguely, mainly through association with Richard Hoggart and the so-called Angry Young Men of the 1950s, now mostly dyspeptic old Tories. Hearing him lecture was an extraordinary personal liberation: it was like seeing someone stand up in the most improbable place, formal and begowned, and articulate with enviable ease and eloquence all the struggling, smouldering political feelings you had yourself, but which were not so to speak official or academic, and which one had simply not expected to hear given voice in such an environment. It was as if a dispirited juvenile offender in a remand home (an experience not far removed from that of an early 1960s Cambridge college) was suddenly to realize to his astonishment that the Governor speaking up there at the front was sending out oblique but unmistakable messages that he was an offender too, a kind of fifth columnist in the prison service. Part of the delight of this, of course, was to hear one's own values and instincts argued far more subtly and beautifully than one could ever have done oneself—converted to a marvellously intricate intellectual case without any diminution of personal conviction. Williams was a man of remarkable grace and dignity; and through the medium of this authority I felt somehow authorized to speak myself, and through me all those relatives and friends who could never speak properly, who had never been given the means to say what they meant, whom nobody ever bothered to ask what they meant. It was as though one's most spontaneous gut reactions, which one wouldn't really have been able to defend, were suddenly out there in the public arena, dignified and justified at the level of tenacious argument. And all this seemed to be less a matter of academic debate than to spring directly from the slow personal ruminations of Williams himself, as though the ideas were just the more public, audible bits of an unusually rich and deep identity. I think everyone who met Williams was struck by what I can only call his deep inward ease of being, the sense of a man somehow centred and rooted and secure in himself at a level far beyond simple egoism. I wondered then where this inner balance and resilience came from, and how I might get hold of a bit. I was to learn as I got to know him that it came essentially from his class background—indeed that the whole of his lifelong political project was secretly nurtured by a formative early experience of working-class solidarity and mutual support which had left him unusually trusting and fearless. But I couldn't understand this quiet authority at the time, or the way he seemed at once so gentle and so rugged, and put it down, I suppose, to middle age, though in fact he was only forty. I asked myself where this man was coming from, and how he could speak out on behalf of the powerless in this place, with this degree of shrewdness and sureness. I understood about a third of what he said, and resolved to get to understand the rest.

* This is the text of a memorial lecture for Raymond Williams given in Oxford on February 12th and organised by Oxford English Limited

A Necessary Duality

Leavis was still lecturing across the road, just on the point of retirement. 'Queenie did it all in the Thirties' was his comment on Williams's work, conveyed to me by Williams himself with his customary dry amusement. George Steiner was at Churchill College, telling his students that the trouble with Williams was that he didn't appreciate the chastening power of human tragedy. Most of the rest of the English Faculty seemed to see him as some kind of sociologist who had strayed through the wrong departmental door and got inadvertently caught up in the Metaphysical poets. They, of course, dealt with the essentially human; Williams was distracting himself with historical red herrings, with class and industry and politics and all of that, and even worse with film and advertising and the popular press. I think this was probably the deepest irony of all, because the most evident difference between Williams and most of his colleagues was indeed a matter of humanity, but as it happened the other way round. Williams's discourse rose straight from a human depth which seemed to put almost everyone else, oneself included, in the shade; it was the *level* at which he spoke, not just what he said, that marked the real distinction. You couldn't separate what he said from the sense of a whole rich hinterland of experience informing his words. Long before the slogan 'the personal is political' became fashionable, Williams was living it, in the complex, intimate relations between his life and work. He never seemed to credit anything he hadn't personally assimilated, absorbed gradually into his own being; and he lived in a kind of slow, steady, meditative way, again very like a certain kind of countryman, taking the whole of his experience with an intense, unwavering seriousness quite removed from the portentous. This seemed quaint, amusingly archaic, to some of the hard-boiled cynics around him, to the young men on the take and on the make whose depth of experience seemed from the outside about that of a Disney cartoon. There were the predictable friendly-malicious comments about the flat cap and the farmer's boots, the kind of talk which Williams himself always rightly saw as a kind of sickness. Even one of the obituaries, tenacious to the last, managed to drag out the word 'nostalgia' to characterize a man who wrote a major work entitled *Towards 2000*. Quite unwittingly—for he was the kind of man you had to work very hard on to make him feel negatively about someone—Williams made people feel uneasy about their own glibness and stylish political scepticism, and they were sometimes not slow to strike back in their anxiety.

Williams's own Cambridge experience had not been primarily one of stamping, braying six-footers. It had been the experience of war: the interrupted English course, the armed struggle in Europe (he was a tank commander in France), then the young servicemen, those who had survived, back on King's Parade to take up their studies again, as a Labour government moved into power. It had also been for Williams the experience of the Communist Party, of which he was briefly a member. When he returned to Cambridge in 1961, after years of teaching adults in village halls around the south of England, he found it hard to get used to the supervision system, to teaching the children of the privileged, and kept a wary distance from the system. Yet it was the

outsider, in a familiar paradox, who upheld the most creative traditions of the place. I mean the best traditions of the Cambridge English Faculty, which Williams personally incarnated for years, among Faculty colleagues who often hardly knew what he was talking about. Williams brought together in a new conjuncture the two distinctive currents of Cambridge English: close textual analysis on the one hand, 'life and thought' on the other. But what they called 'close reading' or 'attention to language' he called historical linguistics, and what they called 'life and thought' he called 'society' or 'cultural history'.

If this was a fertile conjuncture, it was not without severe tensions. The close analysis, he well knew, was by no means ideologically innocent: it was the learnt habit of a specialized, separated intelligence, deeply dependent on unconscious ideological consensus and radically dissociated from how most people actually had to live. To bring that to bear on so-called 'life and thought', on a whole social and cultural formation, was thus to risk becoming caught in an immediate political contradiction. How do you analyse your own people from the outside? Doesn't the very form of that cognition run somehow counter to the content, as Matthew Price of *Border Country* suspects, and Peter Owen of *Second Generation* fears? It is a duality which crops up in Williams's work in all kinds of guises, and one I dismissed with the brisk impatience of relative youth in *Criticism and Ideology*. It is there in the running battle between 'common' and 'educated', between the 'knowable community' and the harsh world of capitalist production, between country and city, Milton and Donne, isolated civilized subtlety and a general common humanity. Williams picks up just this conflict in the work of Leavis, in his obituary—Leavis who 'committed himself heavily to . . . one form of the discontinuities, the detachments, the cold wit of Eliot, yet was seized, always, with especially strong feelings of continuity, of commitment, of the everyday substance of English provincial life'. Williams is surely here speaking obliquely about himself as well; he had a lifelong fascination with modernism, despite the 'realist' label I and some others too facily stuck on him, and saw just how modernism's radical estrangement of the ordinary was at once a creative political experiment and a disabling deracination. Unlike some others, he wasn't going to come down too quickly on either side of that particular fence. If he came in effect to abandon the lineage of 'close analysis' in his later work, it was not because he was not good at it (he was very good at it) but because the political price came to seem to him too high. *Culture and Society* is a courageous, breathtakingly original attempt to bring that current of trained textual analysis to bear on a common social history; but it is therefore an acute instance of the conflict in question, and for all the acclaim it received as a radical text it was written in political isolation in the Cold War years, the book of one still having to negotiate the tension between Leavisism and socialism. 'First-stage radicalism' was how Williams would later characterize this most seminal work, in a calculated self-distancing.

He was always haunted by the border he had crossed from the 'knowable community' to the life of educated intelligence, and lived in border country the whole of his life. When he moved from Hastings to a brief spell in Oxford he homed in unerringly on just the same dilemma:

Second Generation opens on Oxford's conveniently named Between Towns Road, where you can look one way to the spires of the university and the other way to the roofs of the Cowley car factory. Williams never of course believed for a moment that this contradiction, embedded as it is in a class-divided society, could be somehow intellectually resolved, and never in any case viewed it as a simple opposition. One of his earliest essays is entitled 'Culture is Ordinary', in which he argues that nobody who understands the Welsh working-class respect for learning and literature could imagine that it was a sheer break to cross the border from Abergavenny to Cambridge. He also remarked in an interview I did with him towards the end of his life that one of the things his Welsh comrades valued most about him, when he came back to Wales, was exactly the fact that he had crossed the frontier and made his way in the metropolitan institutions. It wasn't just a case of 'culture' on one side of the border and 'society' on the other: what Williams grew up in, what nourished him, was a culture if anything was, and like Hardy's Jude in Oxford it didn't take him long to perceive that it was in all sorts of ways more precious than the nasty, cold-hearted talk he was to encounter in so-called civilized Cambridge. Williams helped to bring the very concept of culture to Cambridge, often enough to have it thrown back in his face by the cultivated. It wasn't a question of some nostalgic backward glance to the valleys and the hillsides: *The Country and the City* takes the 'organic society' illusion and undoes it with deadly, devastating insistence. He once said disparagingly of Nye Bevan that it took one Welshman to know another. I never knew anyone who had a deeper respect for rational enquiry than Williams, and that from a man who knew as well as anybody that reason is not, in the end, where it is at. He never underestimated the value of the intellectual tools of which his own people had been deliberately deprived; it was just that he took the instruments which he had been handed and turned them against the educators. He used them instead to create the finest body of cultural work of twentieth-century Britain, on behalf of those who had not enjoyed the privilege of arriving in Cambridge to be told by E.M.W. Tillyard that his boots were rather large.

Cultural Materialism and Anti-Capitalist Solidarity

Williams was not only ungrateful enough to bite the hand that fed him; he was truculent enough to do it more and more as he grew older. Those liberal critics who had welcomed *Culture and Society* with open arms were rather less enthused by his later talk of Third World insurrection and the brutalities of capitalism. A striking feature of Williams's career is that he moves steadily further to the political left, in a welcome reversal of the usual clichéd trek from youthful radical to middle-aged reactionary. The left reformism or left Leavisism of the very early Williams of the journal *Politics and Letters*, when he was out in the political cold of post-war Britain, yields to the quickening solidarity of the early New Left and CND, where he could find friends and supporters. The little book *Communications* of 1962 proposes with casual boldness and in some practical detail the social ownership and control of the communications media, and by the time of *Modern Tragedy* in 1966 the gradualist discourse of *The Long Revolution* has turned, five years on, into the long tragedy of armed struggle against imperialism.

Around this time Williams began to turn backwards so that he could keep moving forwards, reexploring his Welsh heritage in a deliberate distancing from both 'English' literature and the brave new world of a Labour government whose idea of culture was C.P. Snow. Like many an exile, he had to discover, reinvent almost, his own social history, fight his way gradually past the English and Eng. Lit. identity he had partly adopted, in order to find out who he was. He had purged some of the pain of leaving Wales in *Border Country*, and could now return. That whole dimension enters into *The Country and the City*, a work which he had more trouble in getting finished than probably any other, since its themes touched him to the quick. A new tone, almost a new sensibility or structure of feeling, emerges in that strange, profound, unclassifiable work, which takes a long steady look at the English country estate and reads in its ceremony and elegance one long history of fraud, crime and violence perpetrated against working people. This is a Williams who has now lived through Vietnam and the student movement and the crass utilitarianism of the Labour government, and the change is there in his voice: less courteous, gently reasonable and cautiously circumspect, more dry, steely and sardonic. His writing becomes coldly angry and implacable in those politically turbulent years, and as far as his liberal supporters are concerned he has clearly gone over the edge. 'Sullen' was Frank Kermode's revealing class-epithet for *Modern Tragedy*.

The formal rapprochement with Marxism arrives four years later with *Marxism and Literature*, and the formulation of the doctrine of 'cultural materialism'. But this is done in a way which suggests less that he has finally been appropriated by Marxism than that he has coolly appropriated it. ('Cultural materialism', he declared cautiously, was 'compatible' with Marxism.) He will out-Marxize the Marxists by going the whole hog, extending materialism full-bloodedly to cultural practices too; but in thus pressing Marxist logic to an extreme he will by the same stroke undo the 'base'/'superstructure' distinction and so retain a certain critical distance. That was always Williams's way: he was not only deeply suspicious of orthodoxies, but rarely even quoted another thinker or paused to note an influence. The work was somehow as much all *his* as the life; he gave off a rock-like sense of self-sufficiency which sometimes merged into solitariness, though he was paradoxically the most social and public figure one could imagine. It was not the quirky introspection of one shut out so much as the arresting originality of one out in front; you had a sense of having struggled through to some theoretical position only to find that Williams had quietly pre-empted you, arriving there by his own personal, meditative route. He was a kind of 'Bakhtinian' social linguist when the Bakhtin industry was still only a gleam in the eye of Slavist semioticians; he anticipated by several years some of Jürgen Habermas's major theses on communicative action. He wasn't what one would think of as a particularly feminist writer, yet *Second Generation* is as searching a study of the relations between work, politics, sexuality and the family as one could envisage. As early as *The Long Revolution*, well before the emergence of the women's movement, Williams was speaking of the centrality of what he then termed the 'system of generation and nurture', ranking it on a level with the political, economic and cultural spheres. He refused to be distracted by the wilder

flights of Althusserian or post-structuralist theory and was still there, ready and waiting for us, when some of us younger theorists, sadder and wiser, finally reemerged from one or two cul-de-sacs to rejoin him where we had left off. He had seen the 'Road Up' signs, but didn't believe in barricading a route. I don't think I ever heard him use the word 'theory' in the sense current now in left cultural circles, and though he had a large, devoted following throughout the world he never made the slightest attempt to form a 'school'. I have had American left critics beg me to persuade him to come to the United States, where his work has widespread, enthusiastic support, but he refused to visit the States during the Vietnam war and made only one or two visits there afterwards. He wasn't interested in academic stardom, he had little or no sense of himself as part of a 'profession', and preferred to get on with his work at home.

I think there were limits as well as strengths to this independence. It led him at times into a certain magisterial isolation, imposed the odd Olympian tone or overdefensive gambit on his writing, and frustrated some of his supporters who wished him to launch a more trenchant, collective project. Perhaps he had grown too used to working on his own in the years of adult education; or perhaps he was wary of what had happened at Cambridge to the Scrutineers. Sectarianism bored him, and he had a way of combining the most unsectarian approach to politics with a socialist commitment so deep and unyielding that you sometimes felt he literally could not imagine how anyone could believe otherwise. If a contained sardonic anger was one aspect of his work, the other was a trust in human potential so generous and steadfast that he could be almost physically shocked by the political Right's routine cynical disparagement of people. This was not some sentimental optimism: there was a hard cool streak of realism about Williams, which came out in some unlikely ways—in his impressive abilities, for example, as an administrator and political coordinator. It was just that he knew from his own experience what ordinary unheroic people were capable of, and it drove him to smouldering fury to hear them slighted and demeaned. Tragedy for him was not the death of princes but the death of his railway signalman father, whom nobody would ever have heard of had it not been for his devoted son. It was not of course that he believed that these fundamental values, of love and compassion and solidarity, would inevitably politically prevail; how could such an astute political analyst in a dark period have credited such a view? It was rather that he refused to be shifted, whatever the immediate loss or setback, from the faith that these values were in the end the only ones that mattered, that they might not win out but they were what it was all about, that if you abandoned this then you abandoned everything. He had known what community could be, and would not rest until it was recreated on an international scale. He had a remarkably quick sense of how easy it is to blaspheme against humanity, and the best of what he inherited from Leavis could be summarized simply as reverence. He knew from his study of Welsh history what unbelievable fortitude and resilience an oppressed people can manifest in the cruellest conditions; and this is one reason why it would not have been possible for him to do what so many have now done, scale down his hopes and trim his political sails, face reality. What he faced ~~was~~ for him reality;

and his deep personal patience allowed him always to take the long perspective, to avoid, as he once dryly commented, 'making long-term adjustments to short-term problems'.

Some of the borders which Williams respected least were those which ran between conventional academic disciplines. In the end it was impossible to give his project a name: it was not quite sociology or philosophy or literary criticism or political theory, and it was quite as much 'creative' and 'imaginative' writing as academic work. In a list of his own keywords, 'connecting' would come high in the ranks, along with 'active', 'complex', 'difficult', 'changing'. He was a librarian's nightmare, and had been practising the current fashionable deconstruction of the 'creative' and 'theoretical' for a good thirty years. Language was one of his intellectual passions from beginning to end, from *Culture and Society* to *Keywords*, but his sense of what it signified ran so deep, shaded off in so many directions, that one hesitated to call him a linguist. Words for him were condensed social practices, sites of historical struggle, repositories of political wisdom or domination; he had a Celtic feel for them, for their rich texture and density, and he himself spoke pretty much as he wrote, weightily, rhetorically, constructing and composing his speech rather than slinging it provisionally together. If he was a political theorist it was less in the sense of a short-term analyst (though he could organize sharp political interventions on particular issues) than in the manner of the figures from Blake to Morris of his own *Culture and Society* tradition, prophetically discerning the forms and movements of a whole culture. In this sense he belonged to the lineage of the classical intellectuals, those who eschew a single 'discipline' for a sense of intellectual responsibility to a whole social order; but if he avoided the myopia of the specialist he also sidestepped for the most part the amateur moralism of the traditional sage, if only by virtue of his literary sensitivity to the concrete and particular. Whereas Leavis had accommodated certain social and cultural issues by a literary colonizing of them, Williams came steadily to reverse this logic and 'decentre' literary studies into a wider field of cultural practices; but he never apologized for the fact that his first and persistent interest lay in writing—he simply transfigured the meaning of the category. It was ironic that some colleagues should view him as a reductive 'contents analyst' of literary works, for to him what brought everything together was form. His criticism rescued cultural forms from the formalists and discovered in them structures of social relations, histories of technological possibility, precipitations of whole socially determined ways of seeing. He could trace a change of ideological perception in a shift in stage technique, or detect the rhythms of urbanization in the very syntax of a Victorian novel.

Williams had, I think, an unusually strong sense of himself as an historical figure. If he could be aware of the massive importance of his own work without the least personal vanity, it was in part because he had a curious ability to look on himself from the outside, to see his own life as in a Lukácsian sense 'typical' rather than just individual. He lived everything he did from the inside, saturating his thought with personal experience; yet he also seemed able to place himself impersonally, judiciously, as 'an ordinary life, spanning the middle years of the

twentieth century' (*Modern Tragedy*). That he was at once ordinary and exceptional was one of the many paradoxes about him. Though he was personally the most generous and humble of men, with a warmth so radiant as to be almost tangible, it was perhaps this 'historicity' which helped more than anything to divide him from his colleagues. They were individual dons, working on this or that; his work was an historic project, of an intensely personal yet strangely impersonal kind. He had a quite extraordinary sense of the overall consistency of that work, and of the life in which it was rooted. He lived his life deliberately, vigilantly, as a committed act or coherent task. Others may write a book or two or even twenty, but Williams was engaged on a different sort of enterprise altogether. You had the strong sense that it would have got done somehow whether he was an academic or not; what some left academics sometimes like to feign—that they are merely passing through the system, dipping in and out, fundamentally detached—was in his case oddly true, even though he spent most of his working life as a Cambridge Fellow. He didn't need to apologize for being a don, in some access of radical guilt, because it was palpably obvious that that was not at all the centre from which he lived. As far as the dons went, he was quite evidently not their kind of man, which sometimes bemused the well-intentioned and estranged the politically hostile even further. He assumed his place in Cambridge naturally, with dignity, as though he had a right to it, which of course he did; it was somewhere to carry on the work, and he didn't waste time complaining about the incongruities which that brought in its wake. He had the well-nigh universal respect of his colleagues, but not their collaboration; his collaborator from first to last was Joy Williams, 'virtual co-author' of *Culture and Society* as he writes in the preface to that book. The most intense intellectual partnership, and the deepest sharing of personal life and love, would for Williams naturally go together.

Almost single-handedly, he transformed cultural studies from the relative crudity in which he found them to a marvellously rich, resourceful body of work. In doing so, he altered irreversibly the intellectual and political map of Britain, and put hundreds of thousands of students and colleagues and readers enduringly in his debt. He could do this because he never relinquished his belief in the utter centrality of what he liked to call 'meanings and values'. He fought all his life against various left-wing reductions or displacements of these things, and believed that language and communication were where we lived, not just what we used to live. In this sense, he had held all along what some others on the left came gradually to discover sometime later, through Gramsci or discourse theory or psychoanalysis or the 'politics of the subject'. And then, just when everyone else had caught up with him and was busy pressing this case to an idealist extreme, he turned on his heel and began to speak of material modes of cultural production, of the social institutions of writing, of—in a word—cultural materialism. He had got there before us again, as he would no doubt have done several times more, if his premature death had not taken him from us and left us impoverished and bereft.

Raymond Williams and the Politics of a New Left

The death of Raymond Williams on January 26th robs the left in Britain of its most authoritative, consistent and radical voice. His loss is the more difficult to bear in that it was unexpected and came when he was at the height of his powers. Tributes to Williams have already appeared in many newspapers and periodicals, testifying to a widespread sense that the national culture is sorely impoverished by the death of its most acute critic.* Williams approached literature, cultural studies, communications and adult education in such radically new ways that he opened up fresh fields of study and practice. While this cultural work was linked to his conception of a democratic 'long revolution' its validity and importance were recognized by many who had no prior commitment to his anti-capitalist politics. Similarly Williams's drama or novels contain political themes but, like all his writing, are couched in a language far removed from received political discourse. Part of the value of Williams's work to the Left must be that it did not, and does not, belong to the Left alone. Yet, especially in this journal, it is appropriate to attend

to the political meanings of Williams's work and to begin, difficult as it is, to take the measure of his loss. It will take a long time and many hands to pick up the threads where he left them and we cannot hope to weave as fine an argument. But in however partial a way it is worth registering here those political pre-occupations which were integral to Williams's vision and achievement.

Protest and Cultural Theory

Raymond Williams was one of the founders of the NLR and contributed eighteen pieces to it, covering every phase of its development. In each decade his work stimulated critical reflection on fundamentals of the socialist project—Edward Thompson's articles in the early sixties, the exchange between Terry Eagleton and Anthony Barnett in the seventies and Francis Mulhern's exploration of *Towards 2000* in NLR 148 in the eighties. The Review also collaborated with Raymond Williams in the production of what remains the fullest survey of his life and work as a socialist thinker, the book of interviews published as *Politics and Letters* (1977). This is not to say that the Review always struck the right note in its response to Williams, or that we consistently made the most of the invaluable resource of his intelligence, discrimination and support—attention that could be uneven is now more difficult to explain than misjudged engagement. Yet the larger influence of Williams on the history of the Review can not be in doubt.¹

But this was, of course, simply one aspect of a many-sided contribution to the birth of a 'New Left'—in the *Universities and Left Review* of the 1950s, as editor of the *May Day Manifesto* of the late sixties, as a founder of the Socialist Society in the early 1980s and in many less formal ways as writer, speaker and participant in a great variety of working groups, campaigns and projects.

Following the publication of *Culture and Society* (1956) and *The Long Revolution* (1961) Williams's work became, not for the last time, the subject of debate across the Left. Palme Dutt found little more than what he called 'brand x reformism'. Edward Thompson and C.L.R. James, despite different backgrounds and an ocean separating them, nevertheless concurred in saluting Williams's achievement and in questioning, in a very different spirit from Palme Dutt, its emphases and lacunae. They asked where were Lilburne and the popular discourse of the Putney debates, where were the concepts of Marx's *Capital* and

* Among tributes to Williams were those by Bill Webb, *The Guardian*, January 27th; Terry Eagleton and Frank Kermode, *The Independent*, January 28th, Francis Mulhern, *The Guardian*, January 29th; Blake Morrison, *The Observer*, January 31st; Anthony Barnett, *The Listener*, February 3rd; Tony Bonn, *The Morning Star*, February 4th, Fred Inglis, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, February 5th, Anthony Arblaster, *Tribune*, February 5th, Stuart Hall, *The New Statesman*, February 5th; Patrick Parmer, *The London Review of Books*, February 12th, Judith Williamson, Anthony Barnett, Stuart Hall and Dafydd Ellis Thomas, Channel Four, February 28th, Margot Heinemann, *Marxism Today*, March 1988, Kevin Davey, *Interlink*, March 1988.

¹ Edward Thompson, 'The Long Revolution: Part 1', NLR 9; 'The Long Revolution: Part 2', NLR 10 (1961); Terry Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams', NLR 91 (1976), Anthony Barnett, 'Raymond Williams and Marxism: a Response to Terry Eagleton', NLR 99 (1976), Edward Thompson, 'Afternote' to 'Romanticism, Utopianism and Moralism: the Case of William Morris', Francis Mulhern, 'Towards 2000', NLR 148 (1984).

what had happened to class agency and revolution amidst all this talk of 'common meanings' and 'structures of feeling'?²

The generosity of Williams's approach to pre-socialist, or even anti-socialist, traditions was disconcerting to critics on the Left. Yet it allowed him to tap neglected sources of social critique and to construct a socialist commitment that was to prove robust and weather-proof through several changes in the political climate. His insight into the formation of ruling class hegemony, and the ability of his own work to challenge it, stemmed from his decision to examine the patterns of established culture at their strong points and not to content himself with the comforting simplifications of a purely radical lineage. The main impulse of Williams's work in the fifties was to (re)construct a critique of industrial capitalism as a human order rather than to pursue its specifically economic failures, or alleged failures, in the area of productivity. *The Long Revolution* went on to elaborate new conceptual tools which could identify hidden dimensions of political transformation and deep structures of the social formation. The insistence that political and economic institutions left out vital areas of experience and social practice, the attention paid to whole forms of life and *longue durée*, suggested at least the title and perhaps something in the overall method of Juliet Mitchell's pioneering feminist essay 'Women: The Longest Revolution' in *NLR* 40 (1966). Raymond Williams's analysis of the British social formation or of the culture industry was or became historical materialist by its very refusal of some of the established categories of Marxist discourse.

Williams's abiding concern even with conservative tradition went together with the boldest espousal of new practices and institutions. The patterns whereby culture was produced and reproduced were a central pre-occupation for him, so were the democratic possibilities opened up by transformations in communications technology. In early discussions on the New Left board he championed the efforts of Stuart Hall, as editor, to address such questions and to experiment with a new understanding of contemporary popular culture. His work on education and communications created a climate of discussion and expectation which could not be wholly ignored even by officialdom. In his much reprinted Penguin Special on *Communications* he argued for public ownership of the means of communication, but for their operation to be ruled by a system of leasing to self-managing groups of producers and consumers. Those responsible for setting up the Open University or Channel Four did not directly involve Williams, yet the power of his advocacy remains visible in the better features of these institutions.

An issue of the *Listener* for April 1968 helps explain why even a Labour Minister of Education would not solicit Williams's participation. This weekly published by the BBC, with its articles by Sir Isaiah Berlin and Edward Heath, carried a piece entitled 'Why Do I Demonstrate?' by Williams in which he explained why he had joined the demonstrations against the Vietnam War and outside the German Embassy following

² Edward Thompson, op. cit., C. L. R. James, 'Marxism and the Intellectuals', first published in *Pacific Reality*, May 1962, reprinted in *Spheres of Existence*, London 1980, pp. 113-30.

the assassination attempt on Rudi Dutschke. It is worth quoting this at length since it exemplifies so well Williams's ability to make the most pointed of interventions, to explain to us the wider significance of our own actions, and to put present problems in a new and unexpected context: "Today in a score of countries, the protest march has become a regular part of political activity. In the past in Britain, as at Peterloo and in the marches of the Chartists, there was a style of demonstration that pre-dated liberal democracy, the march of men without votes representing that majority who were excluded from political decision, and a march through the streets with banners because this was still the quickest and most visible means of communication. Today the means of communication are much more developed. . . . Yet parliamentary democracy has become increasingly formal under the pressure of consensus. . . . Moreover the theory of representative democracy, with all its strengths and limitations, is being itself surpassed in practice by the pressures of modern organized capitalism to channel decisions to many non-elected bodies. And a key role in this replacement of representative democracy is being played by the modern communications system, which is not, and does not pretend to be, democratic at all, except in purely negative ways. When the German students, after the shooting of Rudi Dutschke, demonstrated against a press monopoly, they were taking into the streets, and for their own good reasons, what had been for many years a central part of New Left theory: that in any large and complicated society, the communications system in newspapers, broadcasting and television is a major political institution—in its supply of necessary information, in its capacity to select, emphasize or exclude, and in its power to influence and campaign. But this institution . . . is permanently up for auction to rich men, to the new communications combines, who then claim by simple purchase this immense political power. . . . Parliament itself has conceded many decisive areas of power, in economic planning and in communications, to wholly undemocratic institutions which it is in no way prepared to fight. The measure of the failure of the social democratic parties in Western Europe is that by compromising on just those issues, they've excluded themselves from any serious consideration as the means to democracy and socialism. It is in the gap left by that failure that the new movements are being formed. . . . It is necessary to say soberly and quietly that the decay and corruption of the political system, and the intolerable violence now actually directed against the poor of the world, will go on being fought by all effective means."³

Imperialism and Tragedy

Williams drew values from his own background that gave him a deep sympathy with anti-colonial struggle and peasant resistance. While Williams's father was a railway worker, his family belonged to an agricultural Welsh border community, near Pandy, comprising farmers, agricultural labourers, teachers and preachers as well as a few trade unionists. When Williams spoke to the NLR of his earliest political experiences he recalled the Left Book Club established in Pandy, and its campaigns of solidarity with China and Spain, mentioning the

³ "Why Do I Demonstrate?", *The Listener*, April 25th 1968

impression made on him by Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* or a talk by Konni Zilliacus.⁴ One has a sense of a nascent 'structure of feeling'—internationalism reinforced by local attachments and a discursive model of political culture—that was to endure. In an essay published in 1975 Williams explained how his wartime experience also shaped his response to popular revolt in the third world against military rule, landlordism and imperialism; 'I grew up in a working class family with a father who fought in the First World War, in an atmosphere in which militant trade unionism and a hatred of war, that amounted to conscious pacifism, were almost equally inter-mixed . . . we were at once militant about the transformation of society and pacifist about war. But we were not allowed to live with those contradictions. By 1944 I, who called myself a pacifist in 1938, was in Normandy. I can remember a day when there was a counter-attack by an SS tank regiment and it did seem to me even then, even in those circumstances, that a particular point in my life had in a way clarified and in another way been clarified for me. I found it important that they were SS and not just German soldiers, still less the Ukrainian and other miscellaneous conscripts from the Hitler Empire who were usually put in front to absorb our attack. That these were the SS had very great significance. It gave a meaning of the kind I already knew, from report, from the Spanish War. Since that time I have never been able to say that the use of military power to defend a revolution is something that I am against. On the contrary I believe that a revolution that is not prepared to defend itself by military power is meaningless. . . . When I look at the history of the Chinese, the Cuban and the Vietnamese revolutions, I feel a basic solidarity not merely with their aims but with their methods and with the ways in which they came to power.'⁵

Williams knew enough of revolution in the twentieth century for these not to be easy affirmations. He particularly detested those who turned the avoidable and unavoidable suffering of revolution into a terrifying dumb show while remaining oblivious to the violence of imperialism. In *Modern Tragedy* (1966) he reflected on these themes and on the suffering caused by the 'disordered struggle against disorder': 'We have to recognize this suffering in a close and immediate experience, and not cover it with names. But we follow the whole action: not only the evil, but the men who have fought against evil; not only the crisis but the energy released by it, the spirit learned in it.'⁶ In his 1975 essay Williams opposed any resort to physical violence in 'societies with functioning political democracies' except in defence of democracy itself.⁷ But demonstrations and strikes, sit-ins and boycotts could all help, depending on their goals and the extent of popular participation, to extend a democracy that was atrophying at the centre.

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 31. The Left Book Club, which seems to have helped to form so many of the outstanding British socialist and Marxist of the postwar years, should not, on this evidence, be assimilated to the stereotype of an accommodating Popular Front—Raymond here remembers how, aged eighteen or nineteen and fresh from the Pandy Left Club, he told the first Communist organizer he met at Cambridge 'I want to be with the reddiest of the reds'. (p. 41).

⁵ 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?', in Bhiku Parekh, ed., *The Idea/Concept of Socialism*, London 1975, pp. 231–43, p. 238. I would like to thank Kevin Davey for drawing my attention to this text.

⁶ Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, revised edition, London 1979, p. 83.

⁷ 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?', p. 239.

It is characteristic that directly political reflections on contemporary issues are to be found in the main body of Williams's critical work, in a way that would not have been appropriate for an historian. All of Williams's books have a historical dimension. But this history is brought to bear on the present; and there contemporary experience is characteristically invoked as a crucial test of cultural theory. In Williams's hands the Leavis-influenced touch-stones of authenticity and experience enfranchise a world that had been barely acknowledged by criticism before. In a work like *Modern Tragedy* Williams can observe 'I am writing on a day when British military power is being used against "dissident tribesmen" in South Arabia'. These were the actions of a Labour Government and led to the conclusion: 'I know this pattern and its covering too well, from repeated experiences in my lifetime, to be able to acquiesce in the ordinary illusion. Many of my countrymen have opposed these policies and in many particular cases have ended them. But it is impossible to believe that as a society we have yet dedicated ourselves to human liberation, or even to that simple recognition of the basic humanity of all other men which is the impulse of any genuine revolution. To say that in our own affairs we have made this recognition would also be too much, in a society powered by great economic inequality and by organized manipulation' (p. 79).

Challenges to Human Ecology

Williams not only appeared on the platform of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign but also studied the general implications of rural resistance and overseas aggression for a socialist understanding of culture and civilization. *The Country and the City* (1973) shows the process of capitalist despoliation at home and colonial slavery abroad behind the culture of the English 'country house' and the conventions of a pastoral mode that conjured them away. Likewise in establishing a precise social context Williams situated but did not diminish the work of writers whose critical moral sensibility transcended the pastoral. He urged his British readers to consult such contemporary third world authors as Wilson Harris and Ngugi if they were to understand the past of their own society. Against the 'new metropolis', etched in terms foreshadowing debates on the 'post-modern city', Williams discerned a new 'sense of society', prepared to take responsibility for the whole 'human ecology'.⁸

In a conversation last autumn about the recent spate of fictional dystopias—books like Paul Theroux's *O-Zone* and Pete Davis's *The Last Election*—Williams remarked sardonically that these doom-laden prophecies and satires were no longer set a generation or two in the future but were just a few years off. If *Modern Tragedy* had situated itself in a world gripped by imperialism and revolution *The Country and the City* prepared the ground for a thoroughgoing ecological critique of capitalism, and of 'productivist' distortions of socialism. In the late seventies Williams became a sponsor of the Socialist Environmental Resources Association. He was also amongst the first to respond to Edward Thompson's theses on the escalating danger of the nuclear arms race; in the 'Politics of Nuclear Disarmament' he argued that 'to build peace,

⁸ *The Country and the City*, London 1973, pp. 329.

now more than ever, it will be necessary to build more than peace' since there were essential links between nuclear militarism and the persistence of deprivation and unemployment.⁹

While Williams consistently attacked the brittle unrealities of a pastoral or consumerist culture which concealed the labour sustaining it, he could not subscribe to the notion of an unfolding class subject. His search for social meaning focused on inter-subjectivity, and its material pre-conditions, and he always argued that social consciousness was formed between as well as within classes and class fractions. The ambiguous international legacy of the sixties, the deeply contested British conjuncture of the seventies, or the *trompe l'œil* of the 'post-modern' eighties are all illuminated by this relational approach, with its attention to a complex social totality, to generational shifts, and to the bonds of locality.

Williams's characteristic mode of piling qualification upon complexity was prompted not by any reflex of moderation but by a search for accuracy and realism—and by his awareness that human social capacities were cumulative and developmental. On the one hand his work spoke of an unfolding crisis of capitalist civilization and of the main forces arrayed against it; on the other hand it was informed by an acute sense of the variety of forms of culture and association that would be required to assert human control over processes of economic and military competition run amok. Williams's references to ecological crisis were sober and empirical because he wished to foster deliberate and effective forms of social counteraction. If Williams's socialism could sometimes seem to echo and renew Morris's tremendous indictments of capitalist waste and destruction, he never succumbed to the latter's tempting simplification either of the problem or of the solution. Socialism was neither a ready-made nor an easy way out of the impasse of capitalism and imperialism. In absorbing the implications of the ecological critique for socialism he saw that this made both more urgent and more difficult the construction of a global 'collective consciousness'. The political core of Williams's pre-occupations is nowhere more evident than in *Towards 2000* (1983) in which he sought to reconcile the legacy of class-rooted politics with the necessary corrective offered by the 'new social movements'. He saw the latter, though not immune from particularisms of their own, as essential to reconstituting a sense of the 'general interest' rising above particular corporate class interests. On the other hand he insisted that the vital issues put on the agenda by the social movements would 'lead us into the central system of the industrial capitalist mode of production and . . . its system of classes.'¹⁰

The Labour Coalition and Socialism

While Williams's distinctive stress on the politics of cultural practice is what he is most widely known for, it is worth noting that he was particularly concerned with the efficacy and adequacy of party and state organization—and especially with whether such organizations were

⁹ 'The Politics of Nuclear Dismament', *NLR* 124 (1980)

¹⁰ *Towards 2000*, London 1983, pp. 172–3

capable of promoting the democracy of the 'long revolution'. This is a theme that may be detected at many points in Williams's work. The institutions of the labour movement were major cultural embodiments of collective memory and intelligence, but this did not mean that they were adequate to the tasks before them. In an article on 'The British Left' in the mid sixties published in *NLR* 30 Williams pointed out that the very structure of the Labour Party, dominated as it was by undemocratic bloc votes, locked the socialist left into a coalition dominated by the politics of short-term corporate interest and Fabian gradualism. 'The fact that the Labour Party is a coalition has led to an evident poverty in theory; any attempt to go beyond quite general definitions leads at once to strains on this complicated alliance.' Even the most positive social reforms promoted by Labour were infused by a spirit of 'moral paternalism' while in foreign policy Labour governments were 'corrupted by . . . the Cold War', by 'dangerous petty chauvinism' and 'Kiplingesque imperialism'. The structural subordination of the Left within the Labour Party lent a vital role to the Left outside the Party—CND, the Communist Party 'with its guarantee of a measure of militant vigilance' and a more diffuse cultural and political 'New Left'. Already in these early months of 1965 Williams wrote: 'The sound of the young in Britain, so terrifying to all those who have accepted these routines [i.e. "the grey routines of an alienated society"] is a deep and living sound, and it is significant that when it becomes political it is against the whole structure of society rather than for or against a particular group in parliamentary politics.'¹¹

Despite his profound criticisms of Labourism and the Labour Party Williams saw the class loyalties it attracted as potentially open to a transformation beyond its given structure and ideology. He welcomed the emergence of a more radical left within the Labour Party in the late seventies and early eighties because it sought to change rather than simply capture the existing apparatus. He was to become a sponsoring editor of the *New Socialist*, a journal set up by the NEC of the Labour Party in 1981 at a moment when the ascendancy of the Right within the Party was momentarily disturbed following the fiasco of the Wilson-Callaghan government of 1974-9. The *New Socialist*, edited with flair and conviction by James Curran, published a number of key interventions by Williams: attacking the callousness of 'nomad capitalism' and its instrument, the Thatcher government, and saluting the extraordinary tenacity of the mining communities, during the coal strike; in another, assailing the continuing subordination of the Left to Labour's peculiar federal structure. In the debate on whether Labour should offer an anti-Thatcher coalition to the centre Williams adopted a position which cut through much of the cant surrounding the subject by pointing out that the Labour Party itself had always been a coalition of some socialists with the Atlanticist and pro-capitalist Labour Right: 'Whether it's the Big or the Smaller version (of coalition), the advocates of either have in effect abandoned the struggle to transform belief and opinion.' In Williams's view commitment either to a coalition with the centre or to a continuing coalition with the Labour front bench meant rallying round a programme that was known to be desperately weak and

¹¹ 'The British Left', *NLR* 30 (1965).

incoherent and forswearing the vital work of renewing and extending socialist politics. In an interview with Terry Eagleton published in the *New Statesman* in August last year Williams warned the Left of the compromising implications of the Labourist coalition. He argued that the Election pointed to the beginnings of a re-alignment of the Centre with the Labour front bench. While he insisted that 'such a re-alignment of the centre just isn't the Left's business' he believed that if it led to electoral reform it could open the way to 'some federation of socialist, Green and radical nationalist forces.' Williams believed that the 'wholesale conversion' of Labour into a socialist party was an illusory objective which too often led the Left to silence itself. But he knew that any new socialist formation would need to build upon the currents of working class and community resistance that had developed inside and outside the Labour movement during the Thatcher years.¹²

In contrast to a traditional Labour Left politics Williams refused to accept the structure of the UK state as the necessary horizon of socialist action. Strongly committed to linking up with socialists elsewhere in Europe he looked forward to a socialist challenge to the very principles on which the UK state was constructed. In 1982 Williams wrote a pamphlet for the Socialist Society entitled *Democracy and Parliament* in which he not only indicted the secretive and hierarchical principles of its administrative apparatus but also criticized the essentially oligarchic and discriminatory character of the system of political representation within the UK. For Williams proportional representation and the break up of the Westminster system were essential complements to socialist advocacy. The pamphlet ended with a comprehensive programme for the democratization of the state, conceived of as a necessary prelude to asserting democratic control of economic and cultural processes.

One of the reasons for what will be Williams's enduring influence as a socialist can be found in interventions like these: in his patient attention to the cultural and political concomitants of a truly democratic society, and his willingness to address the quite practical problems of institutional innovation that this would require.

The Long Revolution Resumed

Williams sometimes declared that he preferred to think of himself as a revolutionary socialist or communist and historical materialist than as a Marxist. The term 'Marxist' was being adopted because it was felt to be 'more polite than Communist' but it was wrong to reduce a whole tradition in which millions had participated to 'a single thinker, however great'. On the other hand Williams had no hesitation in accepting basic propositions of historical materialism and in making his own distinctive contributions to them in the form of 'cultural materialism'. Historical materialism helps socialists to identify what stands in the way of the growth of liberated human powers: 'Not just an electoral enemy or a traditional enemy, but a hostile and organized social formation . . .'¹³

¹² *New Socialist*, March-April 1984, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, 'The Practice of Possibility', *New Statesman*, 7 August 1987

¹³ 'You're a Marxist Aren't You', p. 241

This hostile social formation could only be challenged by the promotion of a popular self-government alien to the Fabian and Stalinist traditions—and this would inevitably have to contest the roots of bourgeois hegemony within the oppressed and exploited: 'I learned the reality of hegemony, I learned the saturating power of the structure of feeling of a given society, as much from my own mind and my own experience as from observing the lives of others. All through our lives, if we make the effort, we uncover layers of this kind of alien formation within ourselves, and deep in ourselves.' Williams did not counterpose the cultural construction of meanings to the urgent pressures of material survival as they impinge even on the relatively well-off workers of an advanced capitalist society. 'I believe in the necessary economic struggle of the organized working class,' he wrote. 'I believe that this is still the most creative activity in our society, as I indicated years ago in calling the great working class institutions great creative achievements, as well as the indispensable first means of political struggle. But . . . I know that there is a profoundly necessary job to do in relation to the processes of cultural hegemony itself. I believe that the system of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated has to be defeated in general and in detail by the most sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work. This is a cultural process I call the "long revolution" and in calling it the "long revolution" I meant that it was a genuine struggle which was part of the necessary battles for democracy and of economic victory for the organized working class. People change, it is true, in struggle and by action. Anything as deep as a dominant structure of feeling is only changed by active new experience. But . . . the task of a successful socialist movement will be one of feeling and imagination quite as much as one of fact or organization.'¹⁴

Even before Margaret Thatcher's second election victory a startling discrepancy was apparent between the gains of a broadly construed Left in academic culture and the inroads of a 'new right' in popular culture. Williams's own rise to a pre-eminent position in cultural studies in the sixties and seventies was accompanied in these same decades by a remarkable flowering of Marxist history and of significant Marxist work in philosophy, politics, sociology and the humanities generally. But just as Marxism and socialism became influential within the academy so Thatcherism consolidated its hold first on the Conservative Party and then on national politics. In *NLR* 140 (1983) Williams pointed out that the peculiar nature of the British state had given special advantages to Thatcher's Conservative Party despite the fact that it never had majority support. Moreover the characteristic economic and ideological pressures of Britain in the eighties stemmed from the failures of Labourism in the seventies and the mirage of Thatcherism's 'mobile privatization', with its blinkered and unequal consumer satisfactions purchased at an appalling social cost. Williams's interrogation of easy credit and easy unemployment, of the myriad intricate means for fracturing and individualizing a consciousness that remained socially determined, already contained within it an awareness of different majorities and alternative organizing principles.¹⁵

¹⁴ 'You're a Marxist Aren't You?', p. 239.

¹⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Problems of the Coming Period', *NLR* 140 (1983).

Williams was never content simply with reaching conclusions for himself or with securing recognition for them within the academy. The publication of *Keywords* (1976) allowed him both to deepen his argument concerning the cultural construction of meanings and to render more accessible his findings. The history of the terms 'individual', 'socialism', or 'bourgeois' enables Williams to point up problems in these words even, perhaps especially, for those who see no difficulty with them. In his article on the coal strike Williams argued that socialists must elucidate the key words of the conflict, learning from the tremendous collective experience of the men and women who had sustained it: 'The point of growth for a reviving socialism is now in all these crisis-ridden communities: not as special cases but as a general case. It is here, in diversity and respect for diversity, that new popular forces are forming and looking for some effective articulation. It will be long and difficult in detail, but in challenging the destructive catchwords of *management*, *economic* and *law and order*, which now cover the real operations of a new and reckless stage of capitalism, the miners have, in seeking to protect their own interests, outlined a new form of the general interest.'¹⁶

In NLR 158 Williams pointed to the real advances made by the left in education, especially adult education, but also to the adoption of certain self-isolating theoretical procedures and political watchwords. Looking for ways of breaking out of cultural encirclement and subordination Williams was led to ask: 'Should we not look, implacably, at those many formations, their theories and their works, which are based only on their negations and forms of enclosure, against an undifferentiated culture beyond them? Is it only an accident that one form of theory of ideology produced that block diagnosis of Thatcherism which taught despair and political disarmament in a social situation which was always more diverse, more volatile and more temporary? Or is there never to be an end to petty bourgeois theorists making long term adjustment to short-term situations? Or, in the case of several kinds of recent art, can we raise again the question of whether showing the exploited as degraded does not simply prolong the lease of the exploiter?'¹⁷

Williams leaves us with many questions, some of them uncomfortable and some more broadly construed than a first reading might suppose. He also leaves us with many pointers as to where the answers may lie—in his great works of culture criticism, in his many essays and interventions, in directly political works such as *Towards 2000* and not least in his own exemplary sense of responsibility to past and future generations.

¹⁶ 'Mining the Meaning: Key Words in the Miners Strike', *New Socialist*, March 1985.

¹⁷ 'The Road to Vitebsk', NLR 158 (1986).

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The Global Economy: New Edifice or Crumbling Foundations?

It is now virtually a commonplace among left observers and activists that we have recently witnessed the emergence of a New International Division of Labour and the Globalization of Production.* For many, these twin tendencies manifest such deep structural transformations in the world economy that group or government efforts to swim against the currents are becoming increasingly ineffectual, if not futile. The power of labour, community and the state has seemed to wither as multinational corporations sweep irresistibly around the globe. The roots of these concerns, at least in the advanced capitalist countries, are obvious—manifested, for example, in rising unemployment, sectoral devastation in many traditional industries, and insistent corporate demands for concessions on wages, benefits and working conditions. Intensifying international competition appears to be casting its shadow more and more broadly across the economic landscape, chilling the spirit of growing numbers of organized and unorganized workers alike.

Some of these concerns are clearly warranted, since there have been striking changes in the dynamics of the world economy over the past fifteen years. But many others stem from a transposition of trend and long cycle, confusing the effects of continuing stagnation in the world capitalist economy with the auguries of a transformation of the global capitalist order. It is not always easy to discriminate between the decay of an older order and the inauguration of a new. I argue in this essay, indeed, that widespread perceptions about the NIDL and the GOP have been significantly distorted and that much of the conventional wisdom prevailing on the left (and elsewhere) about recent changes in the global economy requires substantial revision. These changes are best understood *not* as a symptom of structural transformation but rather as a consequence of the *erosion* of the social structure of accumulation which conditioned international capitalist prosperity during the 1950s and 1960s.¹ We are still experiencing the decay of the older order and not yet the inauguration of a new.²

Because in my own experience many on the left find this argument both discomfiting and at first blush implausible, I should begin with a number of cautions. First, I do not intend to unveil a subtle and extended argument that nothing at all has changed in the global economy; this is not going to be one of those magical moments in which *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. There have been vast and quickening changes throughout the world with unsettling impact on the vast majority of ordinary people. Far from denying the importance of these changes, I want rather to suggest that they have been widely misunderstood and that this misunderstanding has undermined our ability to respond to and oppose them.

Second, it may appear in much of what follows that I am belittling the power of capital, especially the mammoth transnational corporations (TNCs) who currently bear witness to its historic extension and dynamism. Quite to the contrary, I yield to few in my apprehension of the global power of capitalists and their corporate juggernauts. I shall argue, nonetheless, that we have all been staggering from the blows of economic crisis, including the multinationals. It is not at all clear that they have already achieved new global structures of coordination and control which will *necessarily* enhance their power through the coming decades. Yes, they have huge resources. And yes, they can still take their capital out on strike if they dislike our behaviour at the bargaining table. But they are much less invulnerable, with far less security about the future, than many on the left appear to believe.

* I am grateful to Lyuba Zarsky for excellent research assistance. I would also like to thank seminar and conference participants at the New School for Social Research, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Cornell University, as well as Perry Anderson, Samuel Bowles, Mike Davis, Bennett Harrison, Timothy Koechlin, Arthur MacEwan, Alan Lipsetz, Hugo Radtke, and Bill Tabb for helpful reactions to earlier formulations of some of these arguments.

¹ The concept of a 'social structure of accumulation' will be introduced in the third section of this essay.

² In communication about this paper, Arthur MacEwan worries that the term 'decay' may imply too much collapse too quickly. In making many of the same points which I develop here, he has used the term 'unstable empire' to emphasize the sustained (if residual) power which US multinationals, however embattled, are still able to apply. See, for instance, Arthur MacEwan, 'Unstable Empire' *U.S. Business in the International Economy*, 104 *Bulletin*, January 1985, pp. 40-46.

I want finally to stress the provisional and tentative character of much of my argument. It is difficult to challenge a fairly entrenched conventional wisdom without at times sounding shrill, caricaturing views, or overstating one's own conclusions. My purpose in this essay is as much to raise questions as to insist upon particular answers. I write with great respect for the hundreds who have contributed to the recent literature on the changing global economy. But I also write from an urgent concern that we not handcuff ourselves politically with misplaced and potentially crippling perceptions about a new global order.

My argument is divided into three principal sections. First I review the prevailing perceptions of trends toward an NIDL and the GOP. I then present some synthetic historical evidence on the character and relative importance of recent changes in the global economy which grounds my scepticism about the adequacy of much of the conventional wisdom. A third section develops an alternative view of these recent trends, sketching a brief synthetic macro-institutional account of the structure and erosion of the global political economy in the postwar period. A brief concluding section reviews some of the implications of this analysis.

I. Prevailing Perceptions of a Changing Global Economy

Distinguishing among secular, crisis, and transformational trends in the global economy would be difficult enough. Our task is further complicated by a difference between two somewhat divergent hypotheses about structural transformations, which I shall refer to respectively as the NIDL and the GOP hypotheses. The NIDL perspective stresses a new division of labour between the North and the South, the advanced and the developing countries.³ In a critical review of this perspective, Dieter Ernst has usefully summarized its internal logic. 'According to the NIDL theory, a new capitalist world economy has emerged, its main feature being a massive migration of capital from major OECD countries to low-cost production sites in the Third World. The main purpose of establishing such a new international division of labour is to exploit reserve supplies of labour on a world scale. This type of an internationalization of capital requires the existence of world markets for labour and production sites, and of one global industrial reserve army of labour.'⁴ The GOP perspective places much less emphasis on the movement of production from the North to the South and much more weight on the centralization and concentration of capital through two related developments: first, the spreading importance of decentralized production sites in *both* the advanced and the developing countries; and second, the increasingly centralized control and coordination by transnational corporations of these decentralized production units. These two trends have combined, according to the GOP, to foster both increasing

³ The main hypothesis is probably best represented by Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye, *The New International Division of Labour*, New York, 1980.

⁴ Dieter Ernst, *Restructuring World Industry in a Period of Crisis—The Role of Immigration: An Analysis of Recent Developments in the Semi-conductor Industry, Vietnam, 1981*, p. 287.

international inter-dependence and enhanced TNC leverage over national governments and domestic unions.⁵

However well developed the trends which have prompted this literature, many on the left were surprisingly slow on the uptake. This conceptual torpor apparently stemmed, to some significant degree, from a dissonance between (a) the advantages which Third World economies have appeared to gain in recent years (through the NIDL/GOP) and (b) the traditional presuppositions about imperialist exploitation which dominated earlier generations of Marxian analysis.⁶ As Alain Lipietz has sharply observed in reviewing the reactions of many traditional Marxists, "Two stopped watches clock the movement of history. The South is stagnating? The "dependency" watch gives the exact time. A "new industrialization" is emerging? It's time for a "take-off". The "newly industrializing countries" are entering a crisis? Well, dependency theory has always argued . . ."⁷

Beginning to reset those watches, many leftists (both Marxian and non-Marxian) have by now responded directly to recent developments.⁸ It is probably most useful to summarize prevailing left adherence to some combination of the prevailing NIDL and GOP perspectives through a schematic sequence of propositions:

Tendency No. 1: Productive capital has been re-located on a vastly more global scale, with a heightened degree of geographic specialization and global interdependence, involving significant decentralization to previously underdeveloped production sites, especially in the Third World or at least in the 'newly industrializing countries' (NICs). One reads frequently, in Fröbel's words, of a 'world-wide reorganization of capitalist production.'⁹ 'In sum,' Nigel Harris concludes, 'the process of dispersal of manufacturing capacity is a general phenomenon . . ., [involving] increasingly complex patterns of changing specialization,

⁵ Although the literature does not stress this distinction between the NIDL and the GOP perspectives, the latter is probably best represented by Ernst, *Restructuring*; Barry Blosstone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry*, New York 1982, United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Survey on Transnational Corporations: 1983*, New York 1983, Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide. Possibilities for Prosperity*, New York 1984, and Bennett Harrison, 'Cold Bath or Restructuring?' *Science and Society*, Spring 1987, pp. 72-81. See also, for a somewhat different kind of account, Michel Béaud, *Le Système national mondial industriel*, Paris 1987. I am grateful to Bennett Harrison for help in clarifying the difference between these emphases in the GOP perspective and the sharper North/South focus of the NIDL orientation.

⁶ This would appear to help explain the intense suspicion which many in the Marxian literature have expressed about theories of 'convergence' between developed and developing countries. See, as the principal proponent of convergence, Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, London 1980. For a useful summary of reactions, see Rhys Jenkins, 'Divisions over the International Division of Labour,' *Capital & Class*, Spring 1984, pp. 28-37.

⁷ Alain Lipietz, 'De la nouvelle division internationale du travail à la crise du fordisme périphérique,' CEPREMAP Working Paper No. 8225, November 1982, p. 2. Translated from the French.

⁸ I have found the survey article by Jenkins, 'Divisions over the International Division of Labour,' especially useful. See also the recent discussion by John Willoughby, *Capitalist Imperialism, Crisis and the State*, New York 1986, especially pp. 49-54.

⁹ Folker Fröbel, 'The Current Development of the World Economy,' United Nations University Working Paper, 1980, p. 26.

interweaving different parts of the world unknowingly in collaborative processes of production.¹⁰

Tendency No. 2: Transnational corporations have developed vastly more capacious structures of coordination and control of these re-organized production sites, allowing much more flexible circulation of capital and commodities within their empires.¹¹ 'This increasing geographical specialization of the internal units of the firm,' Allen J. Scott and Michael Storper write, 'vastly increases corporate flexibility.'¹²

Tendency No. 3: The rapid internationalization of finance capital has dramatically enhanced the reach of TNCs and reinforced the pressure on local production sites to achieve 'average social' profitability. Storper and Scott write: 'The internationalization of finance capital . . . encourages further internationalization and competition on the basis of international productivity and price standards.'¹³

Consequence No. 1: As a result of the combination of all three of these tendencies, the mobility of capital has dramatically accelerated, circulating with unprecedented speed in search of the lowest costs of production and the highest possible rates of surplus value and realized profit. 'Multinational corporations now shift capital and locate facilities around the world,' as Jeff Faux puts it, 'as easily as they used to move them within one country.'¹⁴ Bluestone and Harrison speak, indeed, of a new 'hypermobility' of capital. I sometimes get the image, in playful moments, of capital as the roadrunner, whizzing around the globe, honking every time it escapes the grasp of local labour and pausing to rest, only for a moment, when profit conditions seem perfectly ripe.

Consequence No. 2: The razor's edge of capitalist competition has sharpened: local enterprises are increasingly constrained to match the lowest-cost producers in competitive global markets or risk getting their wrists slashed. Much of the recent emphasis on this development places central emphasis, in Bennett Harrison's words, 'on the technical, social and *political* importance of heightened interindustry, interregional, and international competition in the current moment.'¹⁵

¹⁰ *The End of the Third World. Newly Industrializing Countries and the Decline of an Ideology*, London 1987, p. 116

¹¹ Harrison, 'Cold Bath or Restructuring?', provides one useful account of the linkages between these observations and traditional theoretical concern within the Marxist tradition with inter-capitalist competition

¹² 'Industrial Change and Territorial Organization: A Summing Up,' in Scott and Storper, eds., *Production, Work, Territory. The Geographical Anatomy of Industrial Capitalism*, Boston 1986, p. 306.

¹³ 'Production, Work, Territory: Contemporary Realities and Theoretical Tasks,' in Scott and Storper, eds., *Production, Work, Territory*, p. 6

¹⁴ 'The Post-Reagan Economy: A New Democratic Deal,' *World Policy Journal*, Spring 1986, p. 186

¹⁵ 'Cold Bath or Restructuring?' p. 75, emphasis in the original. It is interesting to note that this strand of left analysis most closely parallels neoclassical responses to recent global trends. For neoclassical economists, this intensification of competition simply reasserts the laws of international comparative advantage. See, for example, William Branson, 'Trends in United States International Trade and Investment since World War II,' in Martin Feldstein, ed., *The American Economy in Transition*, Chicago 1980, p. 236. The net result of this neoclassical response, of course, is a remarkable complacency about the consequences of recent trends. 'Given reasonable economic expansion and international price competitiveness,' Robert Z. Lawrence writes, 'structural change should now be

Consequence No. 3: Both the pace and relative importance of international trade have increased apace, with a dramatic deepening of international trade dependence and, through trade, economic inter-dependence; at least from the perspective of the NIDL, this has been accompanied by a shift of relative trade shares and advantage from the advanced countries *en bloc* to the NICs. 'Goods, services, managers, and even workers move across national boundaries with increasing ease,' writes Jeff Faux. 'Exports now represent a remarkable 22 per cent of the world's output.'¹⁶

Corollary No. 1: In many industries, this implies a shift of production toward and increasingly intense competition from peripheral economies featuring both low wages and surplus labour. André Gunder Frank explains: 'Costs of production are reduced by moving industry to the Third World, particularly labour-intensive industries . . . From the point of view of the world capitalist economy this is a transfer of part of industrial production from high- to low-cost areas.'¹⁷

Corollary No. 2: Vulnerability to such competition exposes workers in the advanced economies to increasingly relentless pressure on their wages, benefits, and working conditions. Scott and Storper conclude: '[T]he work rules, technologies, labour market practices, and so on established in the new growth centres provide examples to and pressures on those capitalists who remain within the older-established manufacturing communities. Thus, the various practices that develop within these growth centres (especially their more conservative employment relations) may well be diffused backwards to older regions.'¹⁸ 'It is self-evident,' Michael Dauderstadt and Alfred Pfaller agree, 'that those participants in the production process who have become exchangeable—the working forces—will face a worsening bargaining-position in the domestic struggle over distribution, while the position of internationally mobile capital improves.'¹⁹

Consequence No. 4: Government interventions have become increasingly futile in an era of accelerating capital mobility and spreading capitalist integration of the world market; state promotion of a social democratic agenda, in particular, has diminishing promise.²⁰ In the advanced countries, Frank concludes, 'Keynesian and neo-Keynesian economic and social policies demonstrably do not work any longer . . .'²¹ In the Third World, similarly, 'one government after another is falling over itself to offer favourable conditions to international capital . . .'²² Harris

relatively easy to accommodate in the remainder of the 1980s.' *Can America Compete?* Washington, D C 1984, p. 83. While leftists can hardly be accused of comparable complacency, what the two responses appear to share is their view of the recent *intensification* of global market competitiveness and its sharpening of the razor's edge of competitive cost pressures.

¹⁴ 'The Post-Reagan Economy,' p. 186.

¹⁷ *Crisis in the World Economy*, New York 1980, pp. 319, 320.

¹⁸ 'Industrial Change and Territorial Organization: A Summing Up,' p. 309.

¹⁹ 'The New Zero-Sum World: International Competition and Global Economic Growth,' booklet published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn 1985, p. 21.

²⁰ This argument has perhaps been advanced most directly by Hugo Radice, 'The National Economy: a Keynesian Myth?' *Capital & Class*, Spring 1984.

²¹ *Crisis in the World Economy*, p. 314.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 320.

concludes:²³ '[A]n increasingly integrated world system lays down narrower and narrower limits to the possibility of local eccentricity, including reform. In a competitive system, holding down the price of labour takes precedence over protecting it, and the domestic economy becomes increasingly a spin-off of a wider order.' The power of capital reasserts itself once again.

We are presented, in short, with a view of accelerating change, fundamental structural transformation, and a dramatic seachange in political prospects. Perry Anderson, writing with characteristic *élan*, lucidly apprehends the spirit of the prevailing views.²⁴ '[T]he radical internationalization of the forces of production—not to speak of circulation—that defines the spearhead forms of capital in the final years of the 20th century promises to render all national correctors, whatever their efficacy to date, increasingly tenuous in the future. In that sense, no bourgeois society—not even the last great classically national economy, Japan—will be immune to the unpredictable tides and tempests of an uneven development whose elements are acquiring a well-nigh meteorological velocity around the world, across all frontiers.'

II. Can We Be So Sure?

There can be little question that some important recent changes have taken place in the global economy or that workers in advanced countries have been experiencing wrenching dislocation. But there is good reason, it turns out, to be cautious about the conclusions which much of the literature has been drawing from these trends. I shall present the relevant empirical evidence concerning the most important generalizations in this literature, although it is impossible to organize it strictly according to the order of the propositions outlined in the previous section.²⁵

In order to distinguish among trend, cycle, and transformation, I have tried to gather evidence for as long an historical period as possible. Where data have permitted, I have compared trends over the last several long swings of the world capitalist economy and have compiled observations for the postwar period which measure changes from one business cycle peak to another.²⁶

²³ *The End of the Third World*, pp. 201–2.

²⁴ 'The Figures of Descent,' *NLR*, January/February 1987, p. 77.

²⁵ I should stress that no one proponent of one or another version of the MID/COE perspectives is likely to agree with every strand of the conventional wisdom about which I express some scepticism in what follows. This section does not serve as a sufficient basis for a full critique of either the MID or the COE views, but merely as an introduction to the possibility of an alternative interpretation—as sketched in the subsequent section.

²⁶ I do not assume axiomatically that there have been long swings in the world capitalist economy since the 1790s but merely seek to allow for the possibility that trends and transformations in the global economy have been conditioned by such alternating periods of expansion and stagnation, see David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Resch, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labour in the United States*, New York 1982, Ch. 2, and David M. Gordon, Thomas E. Weisskopf and Samuel Bowles, 'Long Swings and the Nonreproductive Cycle,' *American*

The Globalization of Production?

It seems incontrovertible that there has recently been a rapid growth of industrial production in many developing countries, particularly in the newly industrializing countries.²⁷ Between 1966 and 1984, for example, the developing countries—including the NICs—increased their share of total world industrial production from 12.2 per cent to 13.9 per cent. Between 1966 and 1984, similarly, the NICs increased their share of world manufacturing production from 5.7 to roughly 8.5 per cent.²⁸

It is much less obvious, however, that these trends augur the transformations which the NIDL or the GOP project. In order to put them in some kind of perspective, it seems necessary to consider the evolution of production shares over the broad sweep of long swings in the world capitalist economy. In Table 1 I present a synthetic tabulation of shares of world industrial production among relevant economic groupings since the middle of the 19th century, choosing reference dates to correspond as closely as possible to the peaks and troughs of the three long swings over the past 120 years.²⁹ How large are the recent swings in global industrial production within a long-term historical perspective?

The NICs' share of total industrial production increased by 2.8 percentage points from 1966 to 1984. We can see, at first blush, that this shift in production shares is smaller than many major historic shifts and larger than some. The United Kingdom suffered a loss of 6 per cent over the

Economic Review, May 1983, for evidence on long swings in the global and US economies. For dating of business cycle peaks in the postwar economy, where relevant, I have relied on Center on International Business Cycle Research, 'Dating National Business Cycles in the Postwar Period,' mimeo, 1982. Where possible, I have organized data to correspond to four successive periods demarcated by business-cycle peaks in the postwar US economy: 1948-66, 1966-73, 1973-79, and 1979-84. (See Samuel Bowles, David M. Gordon, and Thomas E. Wesskopf, *Beyond the Waste Land: A Democratic Alternative to Economic Decline*, New York 1983, Ch. 2, for a justification of these specific periods for the United States, the most important actor in the global economy in the postwar period.) The most recent business cycle had not yet peaked in 1984, by at least some measures, but 1984 was the most recent year for which comparable data were available at the time of final revision of this essay, it comes after a sufficiently long period of expansion, from 1982 through 1984, so that it should not distort the peak-to-peak comparisons very much if at all.

²⁷ I follow Branson, 'Trends in United States International Trade and Investment since World War II,' among others, in classifying the following countries as NICs for this empirical exercise: Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Yugoslavia in Europe; Argentina, Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, and the 'Gang of Four' in Asia—Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Republic of Korea—although Branson himself actually excludes Ireland (Luke Harris, *The End of the Third World*, p. 30. I am somewhat puzzled about the origin of this designation for the Asian NICs—named, for reasons quite obscure, after the four leading followers of Chairman Mao in China after 1971.) This designation creates a slight inconsistency in some of the series which follow, for which I shall try to correct where possible: Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Greece are included in many conventional tabulations among advanced industrial countries rather than among LDCs, but they are also classified as NICs for the purposes of testing the NIM/GOP hypotheses; in every instance where data permit, I extract those countries from the developed country totals and re-locate them in the LDCs category under a special item called 'European NICs.'

²⁸ See Tables 1 and 3 below.

²⁹ It is important to stress that this table can do no better than provide rough orders of magnitude of movements in production shares over such a long historical period. Data for the earlier decades are obviously imprecise. Data for the later periods, particularly after World War II, are somewhat more reliable but the patterns vary at the margin depending on the years for which one establishes comparative country weights in total global production.

Country or Grouping	1870 32%	1896-1900		1913	1926-1929		1938	1948	1966	1973	1979	1984
		20	14		9	10.2						
United Kingdom								6.7	4.8	3.8	3.4	3.0
Bar. Econ. Community	-	-	-	-	-	27.5	15.4	18.8	17.2	15.5	14.1	14.1
France	10	7	7	7	7	7.7	5.4	5.3	5.0	4.8	4.4	4.4
Germany	13	17	14	12	12	12.3	4.6	8.1	7.4	6.4	5.8	5.8
Rest of EEC	-	-	-	-	-	7.5	5.3	5.4	4.8	4.3	3.9	3.9
United States	23	30	36	42	42	28.1	44.4	35.2	29.5	28.4	28.4	28.4
Japan	-	1	1	3	3	5.7	1.6	5.3	7.8	7.4	8.2	8.2
Other Advanced Econs.	15	17	20	19	19	10.9	9.4	7.1	8.2	7.3	7.3	7.3
Centrally Pl. Econs.	-	-	-	-	-	7.2	8.4	16.7	19.5	23.5	25.4	25.4
USSR	4	5	4	4	4	4.9	6.3	11.1	12.4	14.2	14.7	14.7
Other CPEs	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	2.2	5.6	7.1	9.3	10.7	10.7
Less Developed Econs.	3	3	4	3	3	10.4	14.0	12.2	14.0	14.6	13.9	13.9
European NICs						2.9	1.9	2.1	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.9
Latin America						2.2	4.3	4.1	6.7	6.7	6.3	6.3
L. Amer. NICs						1.3	2.9	3.2	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.3
Other Asia						2.7	2.5	3.1	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.9
Other Asia NICs						0.2	0.1	0.4	0.7	1.3	1.3	1.3
Other LDCs						2.5	5.3	2.9	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8

Sources: For 1870 to 1926-29, Walt W. Rostow, *The World Economy: History and Prospect*, Austin, TX, 1978, Table II-2, for 1936 to present, William H. Branson, "Trends in United States International Trade and Investment since World War II", in M. Feldstein ed., *The American Economy in Transition*, Chicago 1980, Table 3.9; and United Nations, *Yearbook of Industrial Statistics*, various years.

roughly 15 years from 1886–1900 to 1913, for example, but lost only 1.4 per cent from 1966 to 1979. The NICs' 1966–79 increase was roughly comparable to the BEC's loss in production share from 1966 to 1979, to cite another example, but far smaller than the gains by the United Kingdom from 1840 to 1870, the United States from 1913 to 1926–29, or the Soviet Union from 1951 to 1966.

The long-swing framework allows us to organize these data more usefully. It appears that major shifts in the global distribution of industrial production have taken place from the peak of one long swing to the peak of the next—during the periods which Richard Edwards, Michael Reich and I have identified respectively as the phases of 'exploration' and 'consolidation' of a given stage of accumulation.³⁰

More specifically, during the constitution of the first stage of accumulation, from 1820 to 1870, the production shares of the United Kingdom and the United States expanded from 28 per cent to 55 per cent. During the comparable period of the second stage (1870–1913), the combined share of Germany and the United States grew from 36 per cent to 50 per cent. During the exploration and consolidation of the third stage (1913–1966), the shares of Japan, the centrally-planned economies (CPEs) and the LDCs rose from 9 per cent to 34 per cent. In these three cases, the expanding group's share of global industrial production increased by an average relative increase in shares of 0.4 per cent per year—a rate of expansion roughly three times the comparable rate for the NICs from 1966 to 1984.

Table 2 looks at the data from Table 1 in another way, distinguishing among (a) the developed market economies (DMEs) whose shares began to decline before or after 1966; (b) Japan and the CPEs, the two sets of mature industrial powers whose shares continued to grow after 1966; and (c) the less-developed economies (LDCs), including the NICs. The table suggests two striking conclusions. First, the periods of consolidation and expansion during the first two stages of accumulation represented a simple shuffling of shares among the DMEs, with their

Table 2: The Composition of Global Production			
Year(s)	DMEs (excl. Japan)	Japan & CPEs	LDCs
1870	93%	4%	3%
1896–1900	91	6	3
1913	91	5	4
1926–1929	89	7	3
1938	76.7	12.9	10.4
1948	76.0	10.0	14.0
1966	65.8	22.0	12.2
1973	58.7	27.3	14.0
1979	54.5	30.9	14.6
1984	52.8	33.6	13.9

Source: Based on numbers and sources from Table 1.

³⁰ *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, Ch. 1.

combined share holding strong at 89 per cent as late as 1926–29. Second, the dramatic decline in the DMES' share during the postwar period cannot be attributed to an expansion in the relative importance of the LDCs, since the latter's share was *no higher* in 1984 than it had been in 1948. If anything, indeed, the LDCs have simply recouped the losses in production shares which they suffered from 1948 to 1966. The single most dramatic development of the past 35 years is the continuing (relative) expansion of Japan and the Centrally-Planned Economies, not the LDCs.

This raises an interesting historical question, of course, about the origins and dynamics of the dramatic increase in the LDC share of industrial production during the 1930s and 1940s. How is it possible that they gained so rapidly in global production shares through the end of World War II (and subsequently lost ground so quickly)? I have myself been surprised by these numbers and have not yet been able to pursue their clues in any detail. I can offer only two relatively superficial and somewhat speculative explanations.

The first is known by many but sometimes forgotten. Many Third World countries responded to the shattering instability of crude commodity export prices in the late 1920s and early 1930s by moving quickly toward systematic policies of import-substituting industrialization.³¹ The results were immediate, particularly in Latin America. While advanced country manufacturing output plummeted during the 1930s, for example, the average annual rate of growth of industrial production over that decade was six per cent in Brazil, four per cent in Mexico, three per cent in Chile, and nine per cent in Colombia.³²

The second factor is much less appreciated, I think, but certainly as important. We often note the devastating effects of World War II on the production capacities of the European powers and Japan and the comparably invigorating effects on the productive power of the United States. We pay much less attention, in general, to the expansive effects of wartime production demands on the Third World countries who helped supply the competing powers. It appears that Latin America artificially benefited from the wartime demands of the United States and that Africa similarly partook of the unquenchable thirst for resources and supplies among both the US and the European powers.³³ 'Enormous American purchases from Latin America during the war eliminated the dollar shortage and allowed the accumulation of dollar reserves,' James Foreman-Peck reports. A number of African countries, such as the

³¹ Nigel Harris notes that these crash programs were often aimed not at deliberate industrialization but at urgent reductions in foreign exchange requirements. In Latin America, 'the world slump of 1929–33 cut the purchasing power of the continent's exports by 60 per cent, and ended the possibility of much borrowing abroad. Most countries were obliged to suspend the convertibility of their currencies, cut imports radically and take measures to stimulate the production of domestic substitutes' *The End of the Third World*, p. 17.

³² *Loc cit*.

³³ It is worth noting in this regard that between 1938 and 1948, while much of the rest of the world suffered war-time devastation, the average annual rates of growth in the volume of industrial production in the United States and in the LDCs were quite close—11.7 per cent per year for the US and 8.4 for the LDCs; these were mutually-reinforcing processes of expansion, it appears (Based on data underlying Table 1.)

Belgian Congo, South Africa and British East Africa, which exported materials of strategic significance, also benefitted from war-time demands.³⁴

If import substitution and wartime expansion help explain the dramatic relative growth of manufacturing through the late 1940s, and if recent gains have served largely to recoup the losses suffered during the period of postwar expansion, is it not possible, nonetheless, that this recovery is taking place at an accelerating rate, portending continually more dramatic shifts to the LDCs or the NICs in the future?

Table 3 organizes the data from Table 1 to help evaluate this possibility. We see in Table 3(a), on the one hand, that the non-NIC LDC share of industrial production fell dramatically from 1948 to 1966 and has remained relatively constant since then. We see, on the other hand, that the NIC share of industrial production has indeed expanded fairly steadily during most of the postwar period—although that increase in relative shares appears to have come to an abrupt halt during the 1979–84 cycle.

Table 3(b) presents data on the rates of growth of industrial production underlying these data on production shares. It shows clearly that LDC industrial production grew rapidly from 1948 to 1966, then at a slightly more rapid rate to 1973, and finally at successively declining rates for the 1973–79 and 1979–84 cycles. The figures for the NICs are consistent

Table 3(a): Developing Countries' Share of Manufacturing Value-Added						
Year	Total LDCs		NICs		Other LDCs	
	Share	ann. %	Share	ann. %	Share	ann. %
1938	10.4%		4.4		6.0	
1948	14.0	+3.5	4.9	+1.1	9.1	+5.2
1966	12.2	-0.7	5.9	+1.1	6.3	-1.7
1973	14.0	+2.1	7.1	+2.9	6.9	+1.4
1979	14.6	+0.7	8.5	+3.3	6.1	-1.9
1984	13.9	-1.0	8.4	-0.2	5.5	-2.0

Table 3(b): Growth in Volume of Developing Countries' Industrial Production		
Periods	Total LDCs ave. ann. %	NICs ave. ann. %
1948–1966	9.4%	14.4%
1966–1973	10.7	13.0
1973–1979	4.5	7.8
1979–1984	0.9	1.8

Sources: Based on data and underlying sources for Table 1. Columns labelled "ann.%" are average annual percent growth rates.

³⁴ *A History of the World Economy. International Economic Relations since 1850*, Totowa, N.J. 1983, pp. 265–6. According to Foreman-Peck, the Latin American share of world exports rose from 7.8 per cent in 1938 to 13.4 per cent in 1946.

with this pattern. The rates of growth of the volume of production from 1948 to 1966 were the most rapid of the postwar period, while the rates of growth in 1966–73, 1973–79, and 1979–84 were both slower and successively declining in comparison with the first phase of long-swing expansion.³⁵

The patterns highlighted by Table 3(b)—particularly that the growth rates of industrial production in the NICs have been declining since the mid 60s, not accelerating—may at first appear counterintuitive. But they seem to make sense upon second inspection.

The stage setting for that decline, of course, has been the slowdown in the advanced countries, within whose compass the NICs were operating: the figures corresponding to those in Table 3(b) for the DMs were 5.6 per cent for 1966–73, 2.3 per cent for 1973–79, and 1.6 per cent for 1979–84. Against that backdrop of deepening stagnation, the stories for the three principal groupings of NICs are slightly different.³⁶

The case of the European NICs appears the simplest to recount. However varied the individual cases of Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Yugoslavia, they were all closely dependent upon the fortunes of the dominating European powers in the EEC. As growth in the EEC slowed, so did export markets for the European NICs. The pace of deceleration in the growth rates of industrial production in those five newly-industrializing European countries almost exactly mirrored the pattern of slowdown in the rates of growth of (real) gross domestic product in the Common Market.³⁷

In Latin America, growth in the NICs was driven much more by the growth of the domestic market; the fates of those economies in the 1970s were much less susceptible to declines in exports to the advanced countries. State policy also sought systematically to insulate the economy from balance of payments pressures. In Brazil, for example, 'the government did not transmit this external downturn into the domestic economy. On the contrary, it endeavoured to keep up public spending to sustain high growth, while reintroducing import restrictions.' Mexico, too, introduced 'tighter controls on imports.'³⁸

In the 1980s, however, the chickens came home to roost. Both Brazil and Mexico had tried further to sustain growth in an international environment of spreading stagnation by increasing their foreign debt. But the debt crisis of the early 1980s erupted, forcing sharply restrictive austerity programmes, sanctioned by the IMF and the World Bank,

³⁵ The conclusion of successively declining rates of growth in industrial production suggested by Table 3(b) is consistent with more detailed annual data for the Gang of Four, Mexico, and Brazil in Harris, *The End of the Third World*, Chs 2–3 and esp Figures 1–4. Harris further shows that the same patterns prevail for those countries in more aggregate data on rates of growth in real GDP.

³⁶ In the paragraphs on these groupings which follow, all of the figures on cycle growth rates of industrial production derive from the data underlying Table 3(b).

³⁷ For the successive cycles of 1966–73, 1973–79, and 1979–84, the average annual percent rates of growth of industrial production in the European NICs were 14.1, 5.8, and 2.0, and of gross domestic product in the EEC were 5.3, 2.6, and 0.6.

³⁸ Harris, *The End of the Third World*, pp 75–6, 77.

which reduced domestic wage growth, effective demand, and ultimately brought the global crisis back home to the domestic economy. The figures for manufacturing growth demonstrate the effects of this crisis. While growth rates for industrial production were only two-thirds slower in 1973–79 than in 1966–73—reflecting the relative success of policies to insulate the domestic economy—growth rates in 1979–84 plummeted to 20 per cent of their 1966–73 levels.

The experiences of the Asian NICs are both most varied and in some ways most telling.³⁹ Each of the Gang of Four pursued a slightly different strategy for sustaining its rapid economic expansion during the 1970s—ranging from heavy public investment in the private sector (Korea and to a lesser degree Taiwan) to increasing industrial specialization (Hong Kong) to enhanced incentives for foreign investment (Singapore). However successful (and varied) those strategies in the 70s, each nonetheless ran into serious obstacles in the world recession of 1980–82. Korea had piled up massive foreign debt and was forced to retrench through policies which somewhat mirrored the austerity programmes in Latin America. Taiwan chose to cut back on public spending rather than face a similar fate; this nonetheless moderated its expansionary surge. Singapore, which had tied its currency to the US dollar in order to enhance its attractiveness to foreign investors, watched its exports plummet during the 1980–82 recession as the US dollar appreciated. And Hong Kong, because of its open and relatively less mediated export exposure, suffered in much the same way as the European NICs. The aggregate result was devastating. While the pace of industrial production in the Gang of Four had declined by only one-third from 1966–73 to 1973–79, it fell by 85 per cent from 1973–79 to 1979–84, to a rate only one seventh its tempo in the previous cycle.

In sum, none of these tables or historical reviews is decisive but the combined historical data seem to warrant three provisional conclusions about the NIDL and the GOP presuppositions:

1. The recent shifts of industrial production toward the LDCs and the NICs are not particularly large by relevant historical standards.
2. These recent shifts are not nearly as large as the gains made by the LDCs during the Depression and World War II and have served essentially to recoup the losses in the LDC share which those countries experienced between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s.
3. It is not at all clear, perhaps most strikingly, that there is an *accelerating* relative shift of industrial production toward the NICs since the early 1970s. According to the data on shares in Table 3(a), the most recent business cycle is inconsistent with that impression. The underlying data in Table 3(b) suggest, moreover, that the growth in the actual volume of NIC industrial production actually slowed after 1966 but merely at a slower rate than the slowdown in industrial production, permitting NIC shares to rise. If and when the advanced world begins to recover from the current crisis,

³⁹ This account relies primarily on Ibad, and Clive Hamilton, 'Capitalist Industrialization in the Four Little Tigers of East Asia,' in P. Lamouche and B. McFarlane, eds., *Neo-Marxist Theories of Development*, London 1983.

is it obvious that the NICs' shares of global production will continue to rise?

One final figure underscores the need for some care in interpretation. Between 1973 and 1984, when concern in the advanced countries about the GOP began to intensify, the NICs' share of global industrial production increased from 7.1 per cent to 8.5 per cent. Viewed against the backdrop of the global history of capitalism, a total shift in share of 1.3 per cent, during a period of stagnation and economic instability, does not seem large enough to warrant conclusions of fundamental transformation. There has been much ado, this suggests, about a relatively inconclusive trend.

Recomposition of Industrial Production or 'De-Industrialization'?

Some popular versions of the NIDL, as well as mainstream neoclassical commentary, imply that there has been a global shift in the composition of industrial production, with an increasingly specialized division of labour between the North and the South. This would seem to imply, more specifically, that the composition of industrial production in the LDCs has moved in opposite directions from that in the DMEs, that industrial production and employment have shifted within the LDCs toward greater representation of those industries in which it has gained comparative advantage and that it has consequently shifted (proportionately) toward other industries in the DMEs.⁴⁰

This hypothesis is not confirmed by the data. We can look at both aggregate and disaggregated data on the composition of industrial production within the LDCs and the DMEs.⁴¹ In the aggregate, among DMEs the share of manufacturing value-added accounted for by heavy industry rose from 62 per cent in 1960 to 67.2 per cent in 1978 while the LDC heavy-industry share rose from 32.7 per cent in 1960 to 56.6 per cent in 1978; the latter is rapidly approaching the former, leading to convergence in the industrial structures of the two groups. At the disaggregated level, we can look at 31 different 3-digit manufacturing industries for the developed and developing economies between 1963 and 1978. Of those 31 industries, there were 13 in which there were no significant changes (of 0.2 per cent or more in their respective shares of total manufacturing value-added) between 1963 and 1978. Of the remaining 18 3-digit industries, there were 15 in which the share of total value-added moved in the same direction in the LDCs and DMEs and only 3 in which the respective industry shares diverged.⁴²

⁴⁰ It is important to note that this implication does not necessarily flow from the GOP hypothesis. Indeed, the GOP perspective might argue the opposite: that increasing decentralization of production has produced a convergence in the composition of industrial production between North and South.

⁴¹ See *inter alia*, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, *Survey*, Vienna 1982, Tables 5, 7.

⁴² These calculations are based on data in *ibid.*, Table 7. Detailed data on changes in industrial composition since 1978 might conceivably reveal somewhat more evidence of divergence than these figures for the period from 1960 to 1978, but I doubt that they would change the basic conclusions. The principal distinguishing characteristic of the early 1980s in the NICs, as Harris stresses (*The End of the Third World*, Chs 2-3), has been stagnation and instability, changes in industrial composition over those years would be unlikely to reveal much about more enduring transformations.

Some proponents of the NIDL and GOP appear to attribute a large share of stagnant or declining manufacturing employment in the DMEs to increasingly intense import competition from the NICs. This analysis has surely prompted many of the more fervent demands for protectionist legislation in the DMEs. There are obviously many potential reasons for shifts in relative manufacturing output and employment: differential rates of productivity growth, different responsiveness of final demand to varying rates of growth in aggregate consumption or to changes in income distribution, or differential susceptibility to import competition. Disentangling these potential effects requires analysis of the relationship among the several constituent sources of variations in the growth of manufacturing output and employment.

Among many studies for the United States, two recent studies provide some especially useful clues; I have not yet seen comparable exercises for other advanced countries. Robert Z. Lawrence uses input-output tables to decompose the sources of relative growth in manufacturing employment in 3-digit U.S. industries between 1972 and 1980.⁴³ Overall, he found that the stagnation of domestic activity in the United States accounted for a *decline* in manufacturing employment of 1.5 per cent while changes in foreign trade effects actually accounted for an *increase* in manufacturing employment of 2.1 per cent.⁴⁴

Bluestone, Harrison and Lucy Gorham provide a more specific breakdown of changes in US manufacturing employment.⁴⁵ Their analysis excludes industries which experienced changes of less than 25,000 in employment and those for which their composition model 'cannot provide an adequate explanation of employment change . . .' because interactions are at work that cannot be broken down into discrete partial effects.⁴⁶ There was a total difference between these two groups of 877.4 thousand in employment change. Of this, 559.1 thousand was due to differences in the growth of final demand. Only about 20 per cent was attributable to a rising import share of final sales. Another 29 per cent was accounted for by a rising ratio of final sales to domestic value added, an effect which they attribute at least partly to the 'possible impact of *component* imports in these industries . . .'⁴⁷ While this is a possible explanation, it is equally plausible that the rising ratio of crude materials prices to output prices between 1973 and 1980 could have accounted statistically for the entire difference, without the 'shift of American corporate production activity out of the country [or] the

⁴³ *Can America Compet?* Washington, D.C. 1984

⁴⁴ It is important to note that these data, covering the period up to 1980, do not take into account the subsequent period in which the rising value of the dollar substantially eroded the US trade deficit—an exchange rate effect which cannot itself be ascribed in any simple way to underlying 'structural' shifts in the global economy. Between the second half of the 70s and the first half of the 80s, for example, Barry Eichengreen estimates that the real appreciation of the dollar, other things being equal, reduced employment in motor vehicles and steel by roughly 10 per cent. 'International Competition in the Products of US Basic Industries,' Working Paper No. 2190, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1987.

⁴⁵ 'Storm Clouds on the Horizon. Labour Market Crisis and Industrial Policy,' Economic Education Working Paper, 1984

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17. Emphasis in the original

sourcing of foreign components for assembly into American products.⁴⁸ Whatever the effects of this change in the sales/value-added ratio, only one-fifth of the difference in employment prospects could therefore be attributed with confidence to import competition, a significant but not predominant effect.

These studies do not prove anything by themselves, but they do seem to point to a common conclusion: The stagnation of manufacturing employment in at least the United States appears to be due much more to the slower growth of final demand than to the intensification of price competition from abroad or to an increase in import shares of domestic final consumption. I suspect that more or less comparable conclusions would apply to the European advanced countries.

Industrial Decentralization?

Some GOP proponents stress an accelerating decentralization of industrial production, with a spreading tendency toward more geographically dispersed, multinationally more diffuse, and/or smaller-scale sites of production. I am limited once again to data only for the United States. As Harry Jerome argued in his classic study of *Mechanization in Industry*,⁵⁰ the reversal of the historic increase in plant size began in the 1920s. Aggregate data on employees per establishment confirm his early arguments, indicating that the size of these establishments reached a peak in 1937.⁵¹ Since then, there has been a consistent but slight downward trend in the size of manufacturing establishments, from an average of 47.7 production-workers per establishment in 1951 to an estimated 39.0 in 1984. The data are inconsistent with the hypothesis of an accelerating rate of decrease in average size since 1972. The same conclusions apply to the entire private sector: The proportion of all employment in establishments with under 20 employees has remained essentially constant during the recent period of 'reorganization', barely increasing

⁴⁸ Crude materials prices, the available measure closest to the prices of intermediate and raw materials supplied to the US manufacturing sector and therefore not included in value-added, increased relative to output prices by 13 per cent. This would have accounted, other things being equal, for a difference in employment change between these two groups of more than 400,000, a difference greater than that which is attributable to the change in their respective ratios of value-added to final shipments.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*, London 1984, and John Holmes, 'The Organization and Locational Structure of Production Subcontracting', in Scott and Sofer eds., *Production, Work, and Territory*

⁵⁰ New York 1934

⁵¹ The standard source for the data on average establishment size is the *US Census of Manufactures*. There are two problems with the published data for the years for 1977 and 1982, the two most recent available manufacturing censuses. First, there was a change in recording procedures for small establishments in 1977 which appears to have resulted in a large one-time increase in the total number of establishments recorded. Second, while 1967, 1972, and 1977 were all slightly prior to their respective business-cycle peaks, 1982 was at the trough of a major recession, with manufacturing employment undoubtedly dampened by temporary layoffs. The data reported in the text adjust for these problems in two respects. First, 1984 is substituted for 1982, the actual year of the most recent Census, in order to provide a comparison at a more or less comparable point in the business cycle with 1967, 1972 and 1977. Second, the total number of manufacturing establishments in 1977 and 1984 consistent with the pre-1977 administrative reporting procedures was projected by straight-line forecasts from a regression trend established for the 1951-72 period (On reporting procedures, see US Bureau of the Census, *Census of Manufactures, 1977*, Vol. I, Washington, D.C. 1979, Technical Introduction)

from 26.9 per cent in 1976 to 27.6 per cent in 1983.⁵² At least for the United States, the trend to smaller sites highlighted by GOP observers does not seem to reflect major recent changes in employment reorganization but rather a long-standing movement away from the huge establishments built up during the period of what Edwards, Reich and I have characterized as the 'homogenization of labour'.⁵³

Establishment size is only part of the GOP hypothesis, of course, since it also emphasizes the increasing decentralization of production, particularly in manufacturing. This trend, however, must be carefully interpreted. Viewed on a global scale, it is certainly true that more and more products are 'world products', with components manufactured multinationally and assembled in one country only at the final assembly stages. But this trend has mixed and ambiguous implications which I shall explore in a subsequent section. The evidence supporting some parts of this hypothesis is not particularly clear. The percentage of production workers in US manufacturing employed in multi-unit companies increased slightly during the early postwar years but has remained essentially constant, at roughly 70 per cent, since the mid 1960s.⁵⁴ And the growth of manufacturing capacity in the Third World, as Jenkins also stresses,⁵⁵ has in fact become increasingly concentrated, rather than decentralized, with a rising share of LDC production concentrated in a relatively small number of countries.

TNC Domination?

We next encounter the impression that large transnational corporations have gained increasing control over the world economy and have substantially enhanced their relative economic power over individual national economies. Large TNCs have certainly grown larger and have acquired significant economic leverage. The top 200 global industrial corporations accounted for 17.7 per cent of total (non-socialist) world GDP in 1960, for example, while their share increased to 28.6 per cent in 1980.⁵⁶ But the powerful are just as capable of competition among themselves as are the small-fry. Almost all of the increase in TNCs' relative economic importance reflects the increased importance of corporations outside the United States. Large corporations (in the top 200) from Germany, France, Japan, the UK, Italy and the Netherlands increased their share of global GDP from 4.3 per cent in 1960 to 11.7 per cent in 1980, while US TNCs (in the global top 200) increased their share from 12.8 per cent to 14.3 per cent. The battles among these groupings of national giants appear to be fiercer than ever. 'International centralization has recreated competition on a wider scale,' Wladimir Andreff concludes, 'with huge amounts of capital opposing each other in the developed countries and in the NICs'.⁵⁷

⁵² *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1986, Table 881.

⁵³ *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, Chs 1, 3.

⁵⁴ *Statistical Abstract*, 1986, Table 1334.

⁵⁵ 'Division over the International Division of Labour'.

⁵⁶ Frederick F. Clairmonte and John H. Cavanagh, 'Transnational Corporations and Global Markets: Changing Power Relations,' Institute for Policy Studies, 1982.

⁵⁷ 'The Internationalization of Capital and the Re-ordering of World Capitalism,' *Capital & Class*, Spring 1984, p. 77.

This competition appears in the data on foreign direct investment, as non-US TNCs have been moving onto turf earlier dominated by formerly hegemonic American and British companies. Between 1960 and 1984, for example, the US and UK share of the total stock of foreign direct investment declined from 65.4 per cent to 53.3 per cent, while the share accounted for by Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Canada and Sweden increased from 9.6 per cent in 1960 to 25.6 per cent in 1981.⁵⁸ Those data are for cumulative stocks throughout the world, but the same kind of pattern is evident in data for foreign direct investment flows from the developing to the developed countries: The US and UK share of foreign direct investment flows to the LDCs declined from 60.4 per cent in 1970 to 53.1 per cent in 1981, while the combined German, Japanese, Swiss, Swedish and Canadian shares increased from 19.9 per cent in 1970 to 33.9 per cent in 1981.⁵⁹

The final test is the bottom line: Have TNCs, with their access to higher profit rates in the Third World and their increasing power within the global economy, managed somehow to immunize themselves from the crisis of the global economy since the mid 1960s? Data compiled by Andreff for 373 leading TNCs indicate that average US TNC profit rates were 8.1 per cent during the prosperous years from 1963–66, 6.7 per cent during the 1967–73 business cycle, and 7.0 per cent during the 1974–79 cycle.⁶⁰ For non-US MNCs the corresponding averages were 3.7, 3.3 and 3.0 per cent respectively. While TNCs have witnessed slightly less deterioration, on average, than non-TNCs in their respective countries, their increasing power has not been sufficient to protect their profitability from the gathering storm.

Has access to Third World investments nonetheless provided one of the few available safe ports in these turbulent seas, providing TNCs with the cushion of relatively higher rates of return? The contrary seems to be true: the profitability advantages of investment in the Third World have themselves apparently begun to erode. In the mid 1970s, the average rate of return for US corporations on their direct foreign investments in manufacturing in developing countries was somewhat higher than the corresponding rate of return in developed countries; by 1985, the manufacturing rate of return on US foreign direct investment in the LDCs had declined to only *two-thirds* of its level in developed countries.⁶¹

Recomposition of World Trade?

Some versions of the NIDL/GOP analysis emphasize apparent shifts in the growth and distribution of world trade. One sometimes gets the image of commodities buzzing around the globe at ever-increasing

⁵⁸ US Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, *International Direct Investment: Global Trends and the US Role* (Washington, DC 1984), Table 1, and 'Direct Investment Update: Trends in International Direct Investment', December 1986, Table A.1.

⁵⁹ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations in World Development: Third Survey*, New York 1983, Table II.10

⁶⁰ 'The Internationalization of Capital', Table 3

⁶¹ Mid 70s figures are an average for 1974–77 from *Transnational Corporations in World Development*, p. 291; 1985 data from *Survey of Current Business*, August 1986, p. 43

rates—'at well nigh meteorological velocity', in Anderson's phrase—produced anywhere and destined for everywhere.

Table 4(a) presents rates of growth in the real volume of international trade over the past three long swings. The data in column [1] suggest the critical importance of the long swing in shaping trade growth. The expansion of international trade was most rapid during periods of long-swing expansion in the stages of British and US hegemony—long swings I and III respectively. Trade growth was more sluggish during the period of expansion in the intermediate stage of inter-imperialist rivalry from 1900 to 1913 and then actually declined in the inter-war years through 1938.

Has movement toward an NIDL moderated the expected (long-swing)

Table 4(a) Growth in Real Volume of World Trade						
Stage of Long Swing	[1]		[2]		[3]	
	ave. ann. % change		Ratios		ave. ann. % change, mfg. trade	
	Years		C:A	C:B		C:A C:B
I	A	1840-1860	4.8%			
	B	1860-1870	5.5			
	C	1870-1900	3.2	0.67	0.58	
II	A	1900-1913	3.8			
	B	1913-1929	0.7			
	C	1929-1938	-1.1	-	-	
		1938-1948	0.0			
III	A	1948-1966	6.6		7.8	
	B	1966-1973	9.2		10.0	
	C	1973-1984	3.2	0.48	0.35	3.7 0.47 0.37

Sources: Rostow, 1978, Table II-5; U.N. Statistical Yearbooks, 1972, 1984.

Table 4(b): Growth in Global Production and Trade					
		[1]	[2]	[3]	
		Years	Growth in ind. prod.	Growth in glob. trade	Ratio of [2] to [1]
I	A	1840-1860	3.5%	4.8%	1.37
	B	1860-1870	2.9	5.5	1.90
	C	1870-1900	3.7	3.2	0.86
II	A	1900-1913	4.2	3.8	
	B	1913-1929	2.7	0.7	
	C	1929-1938	2.0	-1.1	
		1938-1948	4.1	0.0	
III	A	1948-1966	9.0	6.6	0.73
	B	1966-1973	6.7	9.2	1.37
	C	1973-1984	3.1	3.2	1.03

slowdown in trade growth during the 1970s? We can test for this possible effect by comparing trade growth in long-swing contractions with trade growth in preceding long-swing expansions. If we compute the relative decline in rates of trade growth from their peaks in phases A or B to those in phase C, as the second and third columns show, the relative slowdowns in swings I and III were quite similar. If anything, the slowdown in trade growth from IIIB to IIIC was more pronounced than the comparable slowdown from IB to IC between 1860-70 and 1870-1900.⁶² These data measure trade in all goods and services, while the NIDL/GOP hypotheses refer primarily to trade in manufactured goods. The right-hand columns of Table 4(a) provide data on manufactures trade growth from 1948.⁶³ The proportionate slowdowns, as shown by columns [5] and [6], are almost exactly equal to those for the total (real) volume of trade.

There is one further indicator of trade growth during the 1970s: Movement toward an NIDL and the GOP might have resulted in a more moderate slowdown of international trade than one would have expected on the basis of the stagnation of global production. Table 4(b) provides data to assess this possibility, adding figures on the rate of growth of global industrial production to the data on trade growth in Table 4(a). Column (3) compares the relative slowdowns in production and trade for phases IA-IC and IIIA-IIIC. In both long swings, the ratio of trade growth to production growth rose from the A to B phases and then fell dramatically from the B to C periods. It would be difficult to argue definitively, on the basis of these data, that the pace of trade growth in 1973-1984 was somehow better protected against underlying declines in industrial production than had been true in the earlier crisis-phase from 1870 to 1900; the ratios of trade to production growth in columns (3) were 0.86 in 1870-1900 and 1.03 in 1973-1984, a scant difference in trade adjustment. Both kinds of comparisons, then, indicate that trade growth appears to be a function of the structure and timing of successive long swings in the global capitalist economy. It does not yet appear, on the basis of these data, that such historic patterns of trade growth have been affected by trends toward an NIDL or the GOP since the early 1970s.

Increasing Trade Dependence or Globalization of Trade?

The DMEs have obviously become more dependent on international trade. Among the OECD countries, for example, exports as a percentage of GDP increased from 11.8 per cent in 1951 to 18.6 per cent in 1979.⁶⁴ As with shifts in the location of industrial production, however, the meaning of this trend must be interpreted carefully. Trade as a percentage of GDP in the advanced countries rose dramatically from 1840 to 1913 but then plummeted during the 1920s and 1930s. It did not regain its levels of 1913 until about 1970. From this historical vantage point,

⁶² These comparisons have been elided for long swing II because of the incomparable collapse of trade and the arbitrariness of ratios involving the negative figures for 1913-1929 and 1929-1938.

⁶³ Comparably disaggregated data for manufacturing trade are apparently not available for earlier decades.

⁶⁴ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *National Accounts*, Paris 1969 and 1982.

the increases after World War II do not reflect only a secular increase in trade dependence but at least in part also a continuing restoration of trade dependence after its regression from 1913 through World War II.

Trade dependence has continued to rise since the early 1970s, however. Will this trend continue? Historical experience suggests the strong impact of rising protectionism during or immediately after long-swing contractions. Data on recent trends also suggest a deceleration in the rate of rising trade dependence after 1973 compared to the growth in 1948–66 and 1966–73.⁶⁵ The media are currently saturated with indicators of spreading protectionist impulses. There are further alarms about the possibility of an international financial collapse—prompted especially by problems of Third World debt—and the likelihood of ensuing reductions in trade volumes and dependence. We need to be cautious, in short, about the significance of recent increases in trade dependence among the DMEs. Trade as a percentage of GDP in 1913 was double its level in 1870. Trade dependence in 1979, comparably, was double its level in 1951. The rise from 1966 to 1979 does not guarantee a continuing increase in the 1980s and 1990s, nor does it protect against a regression comparable to the 1920s and 1930s.

The NIDL perspective in particular would appear to suggest a shift in export shares away from the DMES toward the LDCs as a result of the rising export prominence of the NICs. Table 5 presents historical data on the distribution of country and regional shares of international trade over the last several long swings. Two brief comments on this complex information will suffice for the moment. First, to judge by the historic standards of Table 5, the two most important shifts in the distribution of trade shares between the DMEs and the LDCs occurred long before the apparent advent of the NIDL. As the aggregated summary in Table 6 shows, LDC trade shares increased from 26 per cent to 32 per cent from 1938 to 1950 and then declined from 32 per cent to 19 per cent in 1966. The movement in LDC shares since 1973 has been governed entirely by movements in the share of the Middle Eastern countries; the non-oil exporting LDC trade shares moved from 16.5 per cent in 1966 to 15.8 in 1973 and 15.9 in 1984. Second, the recent gains in the export shares of the less developed NICs have scarcely begun to recoup their relative losses in the earlier postwar years. As Table 6 shows, for example, the Latin American and Asian NICs accounted for 7.8 per cent of total world exports in 1950; their share dropped to only 3.7 per cent in 1966 and had climbed back up to 6.3 per cent in 1984. The NIDL emphasizes the more recent gains, but a longer historical perspective raises some interesting questions about their relative importance. It is awkward to argue on the basis of these data that an entirely unprecedented shift in trade shares toward the LDCs or the NICs has recently evolved.

⁶⁵ Based on data from Ibed

Table 5:
Geographic Distribution of World Trade Shares

	1840	1870	1901-05	1913	1928	1937 ^a	1938	1950	1966	1973	1979	1983
U.K.	28%	31	20	21	21	21	13	10.0	7.8	5.3	5.5	5.7
Ger-Fr-BEC	19	20	19	19	15	13	20	15.4	27.1	30.0	28.1	30.4
U.S.	7	8	11	11	14	12	10	16.7	15.0	12.2	10.8	9.3
Japan	-	-	1	1	3	4	4	1.4	4.5	6.4	6.3	8.7
Other Adv.	23	19	25	23	19	19	18	17.9	16.3	16.4	14.5	15.9
CPEs	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	6.1	9.7	10.1	9.3	10.1
USSR	5	5	4	6	4	4	1	3.0	4.2	3.7	3.9	4.2
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	3.1	7.4	6.4	5.4	5.9
Latin Am.	8	6	7	8	9	8	7	12.4	6.5	6.0	5.2	5.4
NICs	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5.0	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.9
Asia	3	4	6	7	10	12	11	11.7	5.7	5.2	6.1	8.2
NICs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.8	1.5	2.1	2.3	3.4
Other LDC	2	3	2	4	5	7	6	6.0	4.3	4.4	4.5	2.3
Middle East	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.4	2.9	4.2	8.7	4.6
Rest of World	5	4	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: For 1840-1937, Rostow, 1978; and for 1938-1983, U.N. Statistical Yearbook, various years.

^a1937 and 1938 are included separately here in order to indicate the break between the two series.

Table 6: The Composition of International Trade Shares				
Year(s)	Advanced Europe & U.S.	Japan, USSR, & Sov. Bloc	LDCs	NICs
1840	77%	5	18	
1870	78	5	17	
1901-1905	75	5	19	
1913	74	7	19	
1928	69	7	24	
1937	65	8	27	
1938	62	12	26	
1950	60	7.5	31.5	7.8
1966	66.2	14.4	19.4	3.7
1973	63.9	17.5	19.8	4.1
1979	58.9	15.6	24.5	4.2
1983	61.3	15.9	19.3	6.3

Source: Based on Table 7.

Table 7: The Directionality of World Trade							
A. Composition of Total World Trade (%)							
Year(s)	Total	Industrial Countries			Non-Industrial Countries		
		Within	Outside	Total	Within	Outside	Total
1876-80	100%	50	23	73	4	23	27
1913	100	49	23	72	5	23	28
1928	100	46	23	69	8	23	31
1935	100	26	32	57	12	30	43
1953-55	100	40	25	65	10	25	35
1966	100	62	18	80	4	16	20
1973	100	61	18	79	6	15	21
1979	100	56	19	74	7	19	26
1983	100	47	20	67	9	23	32

B. Composition of Manufacturing Trade								
EXPORTS					IMPORTS			
Year	DMEs		LDCs		DMEs		LDCs	
	within	outside	within	outside	within	outside	within	outside
1935	29.5%	56.8	9.1	4.5	30.4	4.3	8.7	56.5
1970	74.3	20.3	2.0	3.4	71.9	6.5	2.0	19.6
1979	67.1	22.4	3.9	6.6	NA	NA	NA	NA
1983	64.1	22.6	4.6	8.8	NA	NA	NA	NA

Sources: Simon Kuznets, 'Quantitative Aspects of the Economic Development of Nations,' *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, July 1967; Alice H. Amsden, 'Profit Effects, Learning Effects, and the Directionality of Trade,' unpublished paper, 1983; and United Nations, *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics*, 1981, 1984.

Shifts in Trade Flows?

The NIDL hypothesis also stresses the likelihood of important shifts in the direction of international trade flows. Have more and more DME imports been coming from LDCs and from NICs in particular? Has there been a significant shift in the directions of trade of manufactured goods on a global scale? Tables 7(a) and 7(b) provide a first glimpse of historical trends in the direction of foreign trade between the advanced and the developing economies.

Table 7(a) provides at least partial evidence confirming the NIDL emphasis on rising (relative) imports from the LDCs to the DMEs. In 1973, for example, 61 per cent of international trade involved industrial countries' trading among themselves; by 1983, that figure had dropped to 47 per cent, suggesting a move toward greater trading involvement with the LDCs. But three problems immediately arise with that provisional observation. First, the change from 1973 to 1983 only partly reverses a much more significant change during the earlier postwar years. In 1953-55, 40 per cent of international trade involved trade within the group of DMEs; by 1983, after the large increase to 62 per cent in 1966, the DMEs trade among themselves had fallen back to 47 per cent, still significantly above its share at the beginning of the postwar period.

Second, Table 7(a) conflates movements in trade of primary and manufactured products, remaining sensitive to the relatively sharper fluctuations in primary product prices. Table 7(b) abstracts from these problems by focusing on the direction of trade in manufactured goods. It shows that there was a massive increase in DME mutual trade involvement from 1935 to 1970 and a relatively modest decline afterwards. The most important figures, from the perspective of the NIDL hypothesis, are probably those in the column on total exports accounted for by DME exports to other DMEs. In 1935, that percentage was only 29.5. It leapt to 74.3 per cent in 1970. By 1983 it had declined to 64.1 per cent. Once again, that recent shift seems relatively insubstantial if viewed in its proper historical context.

Third, the data in Tables 7(a) and 7(b) do not distinguish between the NICs and other LDCs. Table 8 provides that break-down for the postwar period.⁶⁶ Two conclusions seem most striking. (1) DMEs imported a smaller proportion of their total imports from non-oil exporting LDCs in 1983 than they had in 1959. (2) Even though the relative proportion of DME imports from the NICs has increased since 1966, it has only barely regained the level achieved in 1959.

In every case, according to these data, there is a prominent long-swing pattern in the direction of trade; recent trends conform to that pattern.

⁶⁶ I have not yet been able to find consistent data at this disaggregated level for years prior to 1959.

Multinationalization of Commodity Production?

Some GOP proponents also emphasize that intra-firm 'trade' of partially-finished commodities, through out-sourcing and direct intra-firm multinational transfers, has increased in recent years. Recent studies of the automobile, electronic, and aircraft industries provide dramatic evidence of such tendencies.⁶⁷ It is probably impossible to assess in aggregate the relative magnitudes of this trend. It has undoubtedly played an important role in at least some industries, but it is not at all clear that the quantities involved are either accelerating or irreversible. The most pertinent time series does not suggest such a trend: In 1966, intra-firm trade comprising imports from majority-owned foreign affiliates of US TNCs to their US parents equalled 16.8 per cent of total US imports. By 1982, that ratio had barely increased, rising to only 17.1 per cent. In 1966, more dramatically, the proportion of total US manufacturing imports accounted for by involvement TNC in one form or another—what the U.S. Commerce Department calls 'MNC-associated' imports—was 75 per cent. By 1977 that percentage had declined to 58. By 1983, it had declined further to 46.3 per cent.⁶⁸ Similarly, among US imports governed by tariff provisions controlling parts assembly abroad, the proportion of total import value represented by value-added abroad equalled 51.7 per cent in 1966 and 50.6 per cent in 1979, suggesting no increase in the proportion of value-added derived from overseas production sites.⁶⁹ Largely because of problems of quantification, I remain agnostic about this dimension of the NIDL/GOP hypotheses. If the trend is crucial, in any case, I suspect that its sources and implications have been misperceived. I return to this aspect of recent international trends in the third principal section below.

Table 8:
Composition of Advanced Countries' Imports from Developing Countries

Year	Total Imports	All LDCs	% of DME Imports from LDCs			
			Oil-Ex	Non-Oil	NICs	Other
1959	100%	22.0	4.0	18.0	8.1	9.9
1966	100	21.9	6.1	15.8	5.4	10.4
1973	100	21.1	8.3	12.8	6.8	6.0
1979	100	29.7	14.5	15.2	8.5	6.7
1981	100	32.1	16.5	15.6	8.2	7.4

Source: Same as Table 7.

⁶⁷ See UN Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Survey on Transnational Corporations: 1983*, for useful summaries of some of this evidence.

⁶⁸ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations and International Trade: Selected Issues*, New York 1985, Table IV.2; and *Survey of Current Business*, May 1986, p. 58. These data also reveal an increase in the percentage of US exports to majority-owned foreign affiliates which are destined 'for further manufacture'—as part of the out-sourcing and re-importing phenomenon—from 38.5 per cent in 1977 to 52.7 per cent in 1982. (See data in Betty L. Barker, 'U.S. Merchandise Trade Associated with U.S. Multinational Companies', *Survey of Current Business*, May 1986, p. 67.) But almost all of that increase was accounted for by the few instances of export platforms in Mexico and the Asian NICs—a development whose longevity is somewhat doubtful, as I suggest in a subsequent section on Low-Wage Havens.

⁶⁹ Data provided to the author from unpublished US Tariff Commission tabulations.

A Shift in Investment Flows?

Some who articulate the NIDL/GOP hypotheses often imply that investment is flowing away from the advanced countries in search of more lucrative overseas investments, leading to an accelerating hemorrhage of fixed capital investment from the developed economies. This general impression turns out, however, to be substantially misleading. Because Arthur MacEwan has elsewhere provided a useful and relatively detailed review of the available evidence, I shall merely summarize here the main conclusions which he and I have both reached in our analyses of the data.⁷⁰

(1) The rate of growth of real direct foreign investment has slowed, not accelerated, in the advanced countries. There exists a common impression to the contrary because, as MacEwan notes, 'the data are usually presented . . . without adjustment for inflation.'⁷¹ (2) Through the early 1980s, the share of direct foreign investment going to the LDCs had not increased, remaining more or less constant since the late 1960s.⁷² (3) Even in the Third World, US multinationals' manufacturing investment is still aimed primarily at production for sale internally, not for re-export. MacEwan concludes: 'In any case, the general pattern is clear; US multinationals involved in manufacturing abroad direct their sales primarily to the local market.'⁷³ (4) The net rate of acquisition of affiliates by US TNCs (and apparently by other countries' TNCs) has slowed substantially since the early 1970s. (5) At least for US-based firms, foreign direct investment has become increasingly selective, concentrating in just a few industries and beginning to ignore many of the traditional manufacturing industries in which overseas investment spread in the 1950s and 1960s. In particular, as MacEwan emphasizes, the share of overseas investment in the financial and trade services has increased dramatically since the early 1970s. Even in the East Asian NICs, site of a large proportion of the vaunted 'export promotion zones,' only 32 per cent of direct foreign investment by US-based firms in 1985 was in manufacturing.⁷⁴

By any of these measures, in short, it is difficult to sustain the conclusion that investment capital is racing away from the advanced economies, draining off our shores at an accelerating pace. Further developments in the 1980s dramatically underscore this cautionary conclusion. For a wide variety of reasons which we shall explore in the next section,

⁷⁰ 'Slackers, Bankers, Marketers: Multinational Firms and the Pattern of US Direct Foreign Investment', unpublished paper, University of Massachusetts-Boston, 1982.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷² One set of comparative numbers might be helpful to underscore this conclusion. In 1971 and then in 1980, the LDCs' share of the total stock of manufacturing foreign direct investment emanating from the four most important investing nations was West Germany, 27.7 per cent in 1971 and 24.2 per cent in 1980, Japan, 66.4 and 67.7, the UK, 19.7 and 18.2; and the United States, 17.6 and 20.9. UN Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations in World Development*, Table IV.4.

⁷³ 'Slackers, Bankers, Marketers', p. 51.

⁷⁴ 'U.S. Direct Investment Abroad: Detail for Position and Balance of Payments Flows, 1985', *Survey of Current Business*, August 1986, p. 49. This concentration on non-manufacturing investment was most accentuated in Hong Kong, of course, but nearly as striking in South Korea: only 28 per cent of the stock of US foreign direct investment in South Korea in 1985 was in manufacturing. Taiwan and Singapore, by contrast, had manufacturing shares above 50 per cent.

formerly sweet investment prospects in the NICs have turned sour. Investment has been pouring into the United States, not out of it, while the flow of foreign direct investment into the regions of the NICs has actually begun to decline. According to UN tabulations, foreign direct investment into Latin America and South/South-East Asia (excluding China) declined by 25 per cent from 1981 to 1985.⁷⁵ Capital expenditures in Latin America and Asia by majority-owned affiliates of US companies similarly dropped by a third from 1982 to 1985 while a survey of investment plans forecasts a similar decline through 1987.⁷⁶ The pattern seems evident: For all LDCs with the singular exception of China, a recent United Nations report concludes, 'the only observable trend has been towards a decrease in private capital flows . . .'.⁷⁷

Increasing Competition from Low-Wage Havens?

Perhaps the most powerful conviction of the prevailing wisdom is that competition has intensified from Third World economies whose labour-cost advantages have been continually enhanced in a world of increasing global-market competition. 'Wages overseas will come up,' the chair of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company recently warned, 'but one way or another, the [wage] gap will have to close.'⁷⁸ How important are low wages as a source of the relative LDC/NIC expansion since the mid-1960s?

The first point is the most obvious. Wages in the Asian and Latin American NICs are by no means the lowest in the Third World and have been increasing relatively rapidly since the mid 1960s.⁷⁹ If wages were as important in the determination of production shares as some of the prevailing perceptions seem to indicate, one would have expected a more recent shift in production and trade shares away from the NICs toward other countries in the Third World. But, as Tables 3 and 8 demonstrate, none of this erosion of NIC advantages, on average, has taken place. It is true that low wages have played a central role in the rapid expansion of some labour-intensive industries in the LDCs, notably garment and textiles. These industries figured heavily in the early postwar growth of South Korea and Hong Kong, for example, and to a somewhat lesser extent in the Latin American NICs.⁸⁰ But these wage advantages have been capricious. As relative wages in the NICs have increased, their comparative advantage in these especially labour-intensive industries has eroded rapidly. In South Korea, for example, the ratio of average Korean manufacturing wages to average US manufacturing wages increased more than five-fold between 1966 and 1979. These relative increases have begun to price even the NICs out of some of

⁷⁵ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *The CTC Reporter*, Spring 1987, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Ellen M. Herr, 'Capital Expenditures by Majority-Owned Foreign Affiliates of U.S. companies, 1986 and 1987', *Survey of Current Business*, October 1986, p. 21.

⁷⁷ *The CTC Reporter*, Spring 1987, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Quoted in the *New York Times*, June 26, 1987, p. D2.

⁷⁹ Among Asian economies, for example, the NICs have substantially the highest wages with the single exception of Japan. See Hamilton, 'Capitalist Industrialization in the Four Little Tigers of East Asia', p. 174.

⁸⁰ See, for some detail on relative industrial rates of growth, Harris, *The End of the Third World*, Chs 2-3.

these labour-intensive industries. China has been rapidly expanding its share of garment production, for example, and is now the fourth largest exporter of garments within the developing world.⁸¹

Perhaps more importantly, these have not been the industries in which the NICs have most rapidly gained advantage. Since the mid 1960s, the greatest NIC gains have come in heavily capital-intensive industries such as steel, ship-building, chemicals, and, very recently, automobiles. The key to these great advances has been massive state investment in capital and infrastructure, promoting rapid modernization of plant equipment and dramatic growth in labour productivity. In Brazil and Mexico, and especially in the former, many of these key companies are directly state-owned.⁸² In South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, the state did not directly own expanding enterprises but nonetheless played a central entrepreneurial role in industrial development, often taking great risks and always commanding huge portions of aggregate available capital. Only in Hong Kong, among the most successful of the NICs, has the state not played a central role.⁸³

Is it not possible for indigenous capital and TNCs to achieve an optimal combination of productivity-enhancing investments and utilization of surplus low-wage labour? One industry has served in the recent NIDL/GOP literature as a kind of exemplary herald of this possibility—the semiconductor industry, in which TNCs have been reported as racing to low-wage havens in Southeast Asian export-promotion zones, investing feverishly in highly productive and profitable chip assembly operations abroad. But this example has apparently been badly misinterpreted. In an excellent recent review of this case, Andrew Sayer provides a timely corrective.⁸⁴ First of all, Sayer notes, the industry is too small to serve as such an archetype, with less than 300,000 employees worldwide.⁸⁵ Even if one accepted the more general phenomenon of TNC enterprises in the Asian NICs as exemplifying this prototypical process, the magnitudes remain extremely small: imports of manufactured goods shipped from US TNC majority-owned foreign affiliates in the entire region of Asia and the Pacific accounted for only 1.9 per cent of total US imports in 1983.⁸⁶ Second and much more important, the industry features a wide diversity of strategies, structures, and locations, making it hardly

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41. Harris reports that Korean officials now estimate that Chinese wages are at least 30–40 per cent below Korean levels.

⁸² See, *inter alia*, the especially useful discussion in Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State and Local Capital in Brazil*, Princeton 1979.

⁸³ In addition to Harris, *The End of the Third World*, Ch. 2, see also the very useful analysis in Hamilton, 'Capitalist Industrialization in the Four Little Tigers', *passim*. The example of South Korea, the largest of the Asian NICs, is perhaps most striking on this point, in that case, Harris writes, 'the speculative gambles of the state, backed by its capacity to mobilize resources and force the population at large to support the process, were dominant'. In this respect, Harris also notes, the appropriate comparison might indeed be with the Soviet bloc. 'Not only did the state direct the process, participating closely, it also—in the case of South Korea and Taiwan—imposed what might be seen as a predatory agrarian policy not unlike those in the Eastern Bloc' *The End of the Third World*, pp. 44, 69.

⁸⁴ 'Industrial Location on a World Scale: The Case of the Semiconductor Industry', in Scott and Storper, eds., *Production, Work, Territory*, pp. 107–23.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸⁶ Based on a combination of data presented in *Survey of Current Business*, September 1986, p. 33, and May 1986, p. 36.

reducible to the 'supposedly typical US producer of standardized chips.' As Sayer notes, the only group of semiconductor firms which favours Third World locations is the small subset of US merchant producers of standardized chips—both because of their relatively heavier use of manual assembly and because the 'American tariff structure is much more favourable to the (re)importation of semiconductors from offshore plants than is the European one.'⁸⁷

Most important, it appears that intensive competition and technological change, far from enhancing the attractiveness of the low-wage havens, is beginning to erode it *even among* the subset of firms who have flocked to their sanctuary. Sayer notes:⁸⁸ 'As chip integration becomes greater [a critical technological trend affecting the entire industry], the relative amount of assembly work to be done becomes smaller. . . . These changes reduce the significance of labour costs and hence the attractiveness of Third World locations relative to the economies of co-locating automated assembly with wafer fabrication in developed countries. Although the Third World plants do not seem to be being abandoned, it does appear that advanced country locations are now more favoured for new assembly plants.'⁸⁹ It appears, indeed, that the preference of US TNCs for low-wage havens in the Third World during the 1970s reflected in part the technological *backwardness* of these companies. From the start, a UN study notes, the Japanese 'relied to a greater extent than their United States counterparts on the introduction of labour-saving automated equipment in their domestic facilities.'⁹⁰ As a result, Sayer concludes, 'they have made much less use of Far East cheap labour locations than the Americans It is also partly because of Japanese competition, as well as wage rises in the NICs, that the Americans have recently had to turn more to automated assembly.'⁹¹

Sayer's conclusion stands on its own: 'It should now be clear that many features of the geography of semiconductor production do not fit the popular radical stereotypes of locational strategies of multinationals and the changing international division of labour.'⁹² And if that industry fails to confirm the prevailing wisdom, it is unlikely that others will provide any more comforting support.⁹³

⁸⁷ Sayer, 'Industrial Location on a World Scale', pp. 114–5. (Emphasis in the original.) The term 'merchant producers' is used in this context to stipulate international corporations who produce in one location for re-export in global markets.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸⁹ Sayer points out that these trends are well illustrated by the case of Motorola, 'who recently claimed that increased freight charges, assembly automation and tariff barriers are driving them to shift assembly to advanced countries. Consequently they have now set up two new assembly plants, one at Phoenix, Arizona, the other at East Kilbride, Scotland [within the EEC tariff border].' *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations in the International Semiconductor Industry*, New York 1983, p. xvii.

⁹¹ 'Industrial Location on a World Scale', p. 116.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁹³ Sayer observes, in fact, that similar kinds of renewed centripetal forces are affecting a number of other industries in which re-location to the Third World had been important: consumer electronics, computers and even clothing. See *Ibid.*, pp. 120–1.

III. Global Decay, Not Transformation

If we are not yet experiencing a fundamental transformation in the global economy, how do we explain recent appearances? In this section I shall offer a very schematic alternative interpretation, arguing that we have been witnessing the decay of the postwar global economy rather than the construction of a fundamentally new and enduring system of production and exchange. This alternative account builds largely upon the analytic foundations of the general 'social structure of accumulation' (SSA) approach.⁹⁴

Applied to the period following World War II, this analysis emphasizes the challenges to capitalist control which by the 1960s had begun to undermine the long postwar boom in the advanced capitalist countries. Corporate profitability in the United States and in many other countries declined dramatically from the mid 60s to the early 1970s. Plunging profitability then dampened investment, resulting in increasingly stagnant accumulation after the early 1970s. This stasis contributed to a corresponding stagnation in aggregate output. And, as corporations and their allies in the state began with intensifying vigour to take the offensive against their challengers from the mid 70s on, both economic and political instability were amplified, leading to an increasing uncertainty of economic prospects and a heightened rabidity of neo-conservative assaults against the working majorities throughout many of the advanced capitalist countries.⁹⁵

The postwar boom itself had depended on three crucial institutional features of the global economy.⁹⁶ (1) Both domestic growth in the advanced countries and their relative access to international trade were based on a tightly-structured and carefully-negotiated relationship between productivity growth and wage growth. (2) State policy during the expansion period, itself grounded in the security provided by the Bretton Woods system and the central role of the US dollar, encouraged trade growth among the advanced countries, leading to an increase in the share of international trade taking place *among* advanced countries from 40 per cent in 1953-55 to 61 per cent in 1973 [see Table 7(b) above]. (3) The combined effect of these first two trends contributed,

⁹⁴ For a general review of the methodological and analytic foundations of this approach, with references to earlier work, see David M. Gordon, Thomas E. Wenzkopf, and Samuel Bowles, 'Power, Accumulation, and Crisis: The Rise and Demise of the Postwar Social Structure of Accumulation,' in R. Cherry et al., eds., *The Impaired Economy*, New York 1988, Vol. I.

⁹⁵ While our own work has focused almost exclusively on the United States, there is a parallel institutional/historical account dealing with all the major advanced countries which outlines a similar kind of dynamic. See Philip Armstrong, Andrew Glyn, and John Harrison, *Capitalism since World War II: The Making and Breaking of the Great Booms*, London 1984. See also Lipietz, 'Behind the Crisis...', for a summary of a parallel interpretation of the case of France.

⁹⁶ The analysis in this section is very close to and relies heavily on recent discussions by Arthur MacEwan, for whose insights and continuing attention to the global dimensions of the current crisis I am especially indebted. See 'Slackers, Bankers, Marketers', 'Interdependence and Instability: Do the Levels of Output in the Advanced Capitalist Countries Increasingly Move Up and Down Together?' *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Summer & Fall 1984; 'International Debt and Banking: Rising Instability within the General Crisis', *Science & Society*, Summer 1986, and 'Unstable Empire: US Business in the International Economy'. The arguments here also depend heavily on *Beyond the Waste Land*, although the three of us would all admit that the international dimensions of our analysis have not yet been sufficiently developed.

other things being equal, to a close relationship between movements in the relative unit labour costs of advanced capitalist economies and changes in their relative shares of world markets and trade growth.

Beginning in the mid 1960s the foundations of this postwar system began to erode. Increasingly from the late 1960s and early 1970s, a sequence of inter-connected global tendencies became more and more pronounced. (1) As corporate profits on fixed direct investment fell in most of the advanced countries, leading to increasing uncertainty and hesitation about real productive investment, there was a corollary tendency toward 'paper investment' or what is otherwise called 'increases in financial assets'. (2) Because of movement toward flexible exchange rates after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, there was an increasing synchronization of business cycles among the advanced countries after 1971, leading to increasingly volatile fluctuations of economic activity.⁹⁷ When one economy sneezed, others echoed. (3) Exchange rate fluctuations themselves became increasingly volatile, further reinforcing uncertainty about global conditions and expectations.⁹⁸ (4) This prompted governments to pay more and more attention to money-market intervention in order to insulate their economies from exchange rate fluctuations.⁹⁹ These interventions, in turn, led to increasing volatility and international variance over time in short-term interest rates.¹⁰⁰ (5) This led, other things being equal, to further preoccupation with paper investment and to increasingly rapid movement of short-term financial capital across international borders.¹⁰¹

Global Instability

This set of inter-related and mutually-reinforcing tendencies obviously affected the investment horizons and global behaviour of multinational capital. Three effects of this spreading global instability have been most important and have informed widespread perceptions of underlying international transformation. First, stagnation has spread everywhere

⁹⁷ See MacEwan, 'Interdependence and Instability'.

⁹⁸ These exchange rate fluctuations are not simply the product of increasing variability in the inflation rate, for data on the US exchange rate adjusted for relative movements in the wholesale price index, see Branson, 'Trends in United States International Trade and Investment since World War II', Table 3.18.

⁹⁹ One indicator of this monetary activism is revealed by data for central bank discount rates among the 14 advanced countries for which the International Monetary Fund provides continuous time series on various interest rates. The spread between central bank discount rates, as measured by their coefficient of variation, increased substantially from 1966 to 1973 and 1979, rising by 70 per cent. This increasing spread is normally taken as evidence of central banks 'leaning against the wind', seeking relatively independent control of their own economies and exchange rates in spite of trends among their competitors. (Based on tabulations from International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics*, 1980.)

¹⁰⁰ The coefficient of variation in money-market rates increased over the 1966-1979 period in parallel fashion, a partial indicator of this increasing international variance. A superficial indication that central bank monetary policy helped condition this increasing spread comes from the rank correlation between central bank discount rates and money-market rates in the advanced countries, which also rose substantially over the same years. (Based on tabulations from *ibid*.)

¹⁰¹ MacEwan provides an excellent review of many of the sources and effects of these short-term financial flows in 'Slackers, Bankers, Marketers'. See also James Hawley, 'The Internationalization of Capital: Banks, Eurocurrency and the Instability of the World Monetary System', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Winter 1979.

and affected everyone's conditions and expectations. It is worth reiterating the earlier reports that perceptions of deindustrialization, at least in the United States, have resulted almost entirely from slower growth in final demand—and yet give rise to impressions of import competition. Second and consequently, multinational corporations have sought increasing protection from falling profits and spreading instability by searching for production enclaves where rates of profit on current investment could somehow be 'protected' by special privileges and by higher rates of exploitation. Third, and probably most important in shaping recent perceptions, TNCs have sought stable and insulated political and institutional protection against the increasing volatility of international trade and the collapse of dollar-based 'free-market' expansion of international trade growth. 'Over the past ten years,' a 1984 United Nations survey concluded, 'flexible exchange rates generated an erratic pattern in relative prices and made basic signals of resource allocation very noisy.'¹⁰² In this respect, I would argue that the central features of the NICs are not their low wages or their technical adaptations, since wages are low almost everywhere in the LDCs and new technologies could be applied anywhere. Rather, what seems especially striking about the NICs is the increasingly political and institutional determinations of production and trading relationships. TNCs negotiate with each other and host countries for joint production agreements, licensing, and joint R&D contracts. They search among potential investment sites for institutional harbours promising the safest havens against an increasingly turbulent world economy.

This is a highly schematic account whose generalizations can be adequately substantiated only by much more detailed and quantitatively rigorous analysis than I have yet been able to pursue. I limit myself to a brief and purely illustrative review of some empirical trends which are at least consistent with and tend to support this institutional/historical account:¹⁰³ (1) Foreign direct investment has become increasingly selective. Of the stock of total direct investments received by LDCs, the share received by tax havens and the NICs increased from 50.6 per cent in 1967 to 70 per cent in 1978, while the share of other non-OPEC LDCs fell from 21.7 per cent to 13 per cent over the same period.¹⁰⁴ By the end of the 1970s, nearly half of all manufacturing exports by majority-owned affiliates of US-based TNCs to the United States' emanated from only four countries: Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Of total employment in Export Promotion Zones in 1978, similarly, 72 per cent was located in just seven countries: the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Mexico and Brazil.¹⁰⁵

Further, TNCs' investment and production for export in LDCs is now concentrated in highly specialized and institutionally particular economic sites. TNC affiliates in these protected offshore sites indeed enjoy

¹⁰² *Supplement to World Economy Survey*, New York 1985, p. 11

¹⁰³ As with much of the earlier analysis, I have been limited primarily to an investigation of US-based firms

¹⁰⁴ Andreff, 'The Internationalization of Capital', Table 4

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Survey on Transnational Corporations*, pp. 160,

a modern form of colonial trading privileges. Robert E. Lipsey and Merle Yahr Weiss report, for example, that US exports to LDCs are a positive function of the number of US-owned affiliates in those countries, indicating that foreign competitors are at least partly screened out of access to those countries by the presence of US-owned affiliates.¹⁰⁶ Affiliates of firms from a single dominant home country, furthermore, now account for more than 50 per cent of all affiliates located in 73 of 124 developing countries, while only 6 of 25 DMEs hold the same position of single-country dominance.¹⁰⁷ This leads to the apparent corollary that NIC economic fortunes bear a relatively direct positive relationship to the degree of TNC involvement in and trading relationships with them.¹⁰⁸

The net result, as several others have also stressed, is an increasingly differentiated 'Third World.' Instead of flowing more and more widely around the globe, capital is on the contrary settling down in a few carefully chosen locations. Four different kinds of LDCs can be distinguished even at a superficial level. One category, best represented by the East Asian NICs, has received continually expanding investment (at least until the early 1980s) primarily for the purposes of financial services and production for re-export back to the advanced countries. A second category is best represented by the Latin American NICs, toward which foreign investment continues to flow almost exclusively for production aimed at the large home markets. A third comprises the oil-exporting countries whose fortunes increased dramatically during the 1970s and now vacillate with the cob-web cycles of price hikes and oil gluts. The fourth, including at least 75-80 developing countries, have been shunted off to a side spur, virtually derailed in the drive for access to global resources.

This kind of differentiation is illustrated by the evident trend, reported in Lipsey and in MacEwan,¹⁰⁹ that US-owned affiliates abroad are increasingly likely to direct their exports to the United States primarily or even exclusively if located in the Asian NICs: the ratio of exports to total sales of US majority-owned foreign affiliates in Asia had increased from 23.1 per cent in 1966 to 61.9 per cent in 1977, for example, and roughly half of this increase was accounted for by the rise in the share of exports to the US (out of total sales) over the same period.¹¹⁰ In Latin American countries, by contrast, more than 90 per cent of the sales of US manufacturing affiliates in 1977 were still directed to local markets, and that percentage had scarcely changed since the mid 1960s.¹¹¹

The net result, apparently, is a significant shift in international trading

¹⁰⁶ 'Foreign Production and Exports in Manufacturing Industries', *Review of Economics and Statistics*, November 1981.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Survey on Transnational Corporations*, Table II 10.

¹⁰⁸ See Andreff, 'The Internationalization of Capital', for further discussion on this point.

¹⁰⁹ Robert E. Lipsey, 'Recent Trends in US Trade and Investment', National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 1009, October 1982; and MacEwan, 'Shackers, Bankers, Marketers'.

¹¹⁰ United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, *Transnational Corporations and International Trade*, Table I 2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*; and MacEwan, 'Shackers, Bankers, Marketers', p. 50.

patterns away from a trans-Atlantic to a trans-Pacific pattern of trading specialization.¹¹² In 1970, for example, 28.2 of European DMEs exports went to the United States, but that portion fell to 20.9 per cent in 1983. In 1970, similarly, 30.4 per cent of US exports travelled to European DMEs but only 25.2 per cent in 1983. The same reduction of trans-Atlantic flows affected the rest of the Americas: In 1970, 29.6 per cent of Latin American exports travelled to the European DMEs; that share had dropped to 18.4 per cent in 1983. In 1970, by contrast, 23.9 per cent of US imports had come from Japan and other Asian countries; by 1983, that trans-Pacific share had increased to 33.8 per cent. Out of total world trade, trans-Atlantic trade fell from 13.1 per cent in 1970 to 8.7 per cent in 1983 while Pacific Basin trade increased from 10.2 per cent in 1970 to 14.2 per cent in 1983.¹¹³

Commentary

Several critical points emerge from this analysis which deserve some further attention.

(1) *Determinants of Direct Foreign Investment.* Popular impressions suggest that TNCs choose their investment sites in order to capitalize on low wages and surplus labour abroad. This factor has been much exaggerated and can be substantially clarified by some recent analyses of patterns of foreign direct investment. Two recent studies of foreign direct investment make possible some comparisons of the relative importance of these determinants. In a study of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to 54 LDCs, Friedrich Schneider and Bruno S. Frey have found that labour-force wage and skill-level characteristics were by far the least important among factors affecting foreign direct investment in the period from 1976 to 1980. The combined importance of the size of the home-market, price/exchange-rate stability, and political/institutional stability was fifteen times greater than the influence of relative wage costs and skill levels. Between 1976 and 1980, moreover, the relative influence of price stability and political/institutional stability each increased by nearly a third while the relative influence of wage/skill effects declined by about one-sixth.¹¹⁴ In a study of US FDI to a combined sample of 24 DMEs and LDCs, Timothy Koehlin has also found that the home market and political instability factors were very important. In pooled analysis for the period from 1966 to 1983, he estimates that wage differentials accounted for only about 11 per cent of the explained variance in US foreign direct investment among those countries.¹¹⁵

¹¹² All of the comparisons below are based on data in United Nations, *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics*, New York 1984.

¹¹³ For these purposes, 'trans-Atlantic trade' is defined as exports in both directions between the European DMEs and the US, Canada and Latin America. 'Pacific Basin trade' is defined as trade between Japan and other Asian developing countries and trade between those two Asian groupings and the Americas grouping of the US, Canada, and Latin America.

¹¹⁴ Friedrich Schneider and Bruno S. Frey, 'Economic and Political Determinants of Foreign Direct Investment', *World Development*, 13:2, 1985, pp. 167-75. The comparisons of the relative influence of different variables are based on the values for their standardized regression coefficients averaged for the three regressions reported for 1976, 1979, and 1980.

¹¹⁵ Timothy Koehlin, 'The Location of U.S. Direct Foreign Investment: A Study of the Effects of Market Size, Labour Costs, and Social Institutions', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, forthcoming 1987. These specific results were kindly provided by the author.

How is it possible that relative wages matter so little in determining investment? There are three main reasons: First, in many commodities, labour costs are a relatively small proportion of total costs; proximity to large home markets will matter much more than variations in wage-costs, at the margin, among possible investment sites. Second, particularly in recent years, exchange rates have varied with much greater volatility than wages, so those countries with relatively stable price and trade horizons are much more exceptional than those with relatively low labour costs. Third, and probably most important, investments in plant and equipment must be amortized over the medium-run—say ten years—while larger investments in infrastructure and distribution systems must be recouped over even longer periods. What matters most, for those kinds of investments, is the general institutional climate and its prospective evolution over a decade's time, not simply current unit labour costs. Since, as we have all noticed, political and institutional stability has been bouncing all over the map in the Third World, these sets of influences are especially likely to play an important—and doubtlessly increasing—role in a fragile international environment.

(2) *Flows of Productive and Financial Capital.* The preceding analysis suggests an interesting and important contrast between the dynamics of productive investment and of financial investment around the globe. I have argued that flows of productive capital have become increasingly selective, oriented more and more toward a few preferred havens in the stormy global seas. At the same time, many have observed that financial funds are flowing more and more easily and rapidly around the world in veritable torrents of liquid capital. How do these two developments fit together? Don't the trends in financial flows support the NIDL/GOP perspective even if the increasing selectivity of productive investment seems somewhat inconsistent?

In this context, it is important to view productive and financial investments as either complementary or competing, depending on the circumstances. When economic conditions are prosperous and stable, financial capital flows help support and even foster productive investment. But when the economy has become stagnant and unstable, investors tend to move their capital out of productive investments—because of increasingly cloudy longer-term prospects—and into short-term financial investments. The investment climate becomes increasingly speculative. The past fifteen years appear to have illustrated the latter dynamic. As the rate of return on fixed investment in plant and equipment has declined and as global economic conditions have become increasingly volatile, firms and banks have moved toward paper investments. The new and increasingly efficient international banking system has helped to foster an accelerating circulation of liquid capital, bouncing from one moment of arbitrage to another. Far from stimulating productive investment, however, these financial flows are best understood as a symptom of the diminishing attractiveness and increasing uncertainty about prospects for fixed investment.

(3) *Different Sources of Import Competition.* The NIDL/GOP hypotheses gain much of their plausibility from the phenomenon of intensifying import

competition. But increasing import competition in the advanced countries over the past fifteen years has had various sources which need to be carefully distinguished. One source, of course, has been the other advanced economies and particularly the Japanese economy. The Japanese success story deserves careful attention. But it is not primarily or even significantly a story of low-wage competition. Relative wages in Japan have increased with great rapidity during the period of its continued ascendancy. The Japanese story, by and large, is a tale of corporatist collaboration between large corporations and the state, pushing for modernization and relative advantage in international markets. While this kind of competition is certainly a new and probably permanent feature of the international environment, its implications are substantially different from what some of the NIDL/GOP analyses would imply. We return to these implications in the next section.

A second source of import competition comes from goods and services produced by the foreign affiliates of TNCs which choose to ship their capital overseas and produce for re-export rather than cope with production conditions in the domestic economy. This has become an important dimension of import competition. But it is not obvious that it is either as large or as rapidly accelerating as the NIDL/GOP would suggest. As noted above, imports to the US from the majority-owned foreign affiliates of US TNCs comprised only 17 per cent of total US imports in 1982 and had *not* increased since the mid 1960s.¹¹⁶ It is useful once again to view these trends in perspective. In 1983, only five per cent of all non-petroleum imports to the United States came from US TNC affiliates in developing countries.¹¹⁷

A third significant source of imports comes from enterprises in newly industrializing countries in which capital has been to a significant degree indigenously generated and enterprises are largely controlled domestically. South Korea is perhaps the best example of this type. Here too, however, the sources of relative expansion need to be interpreted carefully. The South Korean model is neither necessarily durable nor clearly replicable. It has not built principally on the advantages of low wages, as noted earlier, but on a particular conjuncture of state capital and state repression. Recent political developments in South Korea further underscore the risks in projecting that model forward as a permanent fixture in the global environment.

(4) *Multinational Power*. It is common, finally, to assume that the power of TNCs has significantly increased throughout the world over the past decade or more. But it is not at all obvious, in light of the preceding analysis, that such increases have occurred. I noted earlier that there has been increasing competition among multinationals as a result of the declining relative power of US TNCs. This increasing inter-corporate

¹¹⁶ It is further important to note, as MacBryan emphasizes, that sales by Canadian subsidiaries to the US market account for two thirds to three quarters of all subsidiaries' sales to the U.S. market—of which Canadian subsidiaries' sales of transport equipment comprise a substantial proportion. 'This relatively strong connection of Canadian subsidiaries to the US market,' MacBryan writes, 'hardly fits with the cheap labour model of foreign investment . . . ' *'Slackers, Bankers, Marketers'*, p. 50.

¹¹⁷ *Survey of Current Events*, September 1986, p. 33; and *Economic Report of the President*, 1986, Table B-100.

competition has been coupled with an increasingly assertive attitude toward multinationals by many governments, particularly in the Third World. Both outright nationalizations and joint ownership agreements have been imposed on multinationals with increasing frequency since the late 1960s. MacEwan stresses the dual character of these arrangements: '[It is true that when] multinationals are forced into joint ventures with local capital, they can often turn the relationship to their own advantage, using local partners as instruments to gain a more thorough foothold in the local economy. Nonetheless, the resistance of the multinationals to these changes should not be discounted. Regardless of the degree to which they are able to make the best of a changing situation, the foundations of their long run control are seriously threatened by the changes that are being imposed upon them.'¹¹⁸ While there may have been some attenuation of these trends during the 1980s as a result of cutbacks in government financing in countries like Singapore and Taiwan and austerity programmes imposed on debtor countries by international financial authorities, it is not obvious that the TNCs have themselves increased their leverage during this period. Inter-multinational competition and the volatility of the international environment, if anything, have intensified with continued international stagnation and the wide swings of the dollar since 1979.

It is perhaps most useful, at a more abstract level, to view the relationship between multinationals and governments as both cooperative and competing, both supportive and conflictual. They operate in a fully dialectical relationship, locked into unified but contradictory roles and positions, neither the one nor the other partner clearly or completely able to dominate. Susan Strange echoes this conclusion: 'there is a symbiosis between state and transnational corporation from which both benefit; . . . they are allies as well as competitors or opponents.'¹¹⁹

(5) *Capital Mobility*. Many conventional renditions of the NIDL/GOP hypotheses suggest a more competitive and open global economy since the early 1970s. My own account suggests the opposite. One possible criterion for evaluating this difference in expectations has to do with capital mobility. The NIDL/GOP perspectives would suggest intensifying competition and an increasingly unrestrained and rapid mobility of capital since the early- to mid 1970s, a pace of circulation which Bluestone and Harrison call the 'hypermobility of capital.' The analysis sketched above would appear to suggest a diminishing importance of labour costs and a dampening mobility of capital since the mid 1970s—as corporations have placed increasing emphasis on investment and production in havens from the swirling trade winds. In order to assess these expectations, we can look at the degree of variability in profit rates among countries. Other things being equal, increasing capital mobility and its corollary international competition should result in a

¹¹⁸ 'Slackers, Bankers, Marketers', pp. 9–10. MacEwan points out that there have been some significant differences between US TNCs and those with roots in other advanced countries in their resistance to such impositions: 'While US firms have strongly maintained their aversion to joint ownership arrangements, firms from the other advanced capitalist nations are generally more flexible . . . The Japanese, on [one] extreme, are caricatured by a position that says: take any arrangement necessary to get established in a country and make the most of it' (p. 60).

¹¹⁹ 'Supranationals and the State', in John A. Hall, ed., *States in History*, London 1986, p. 301.

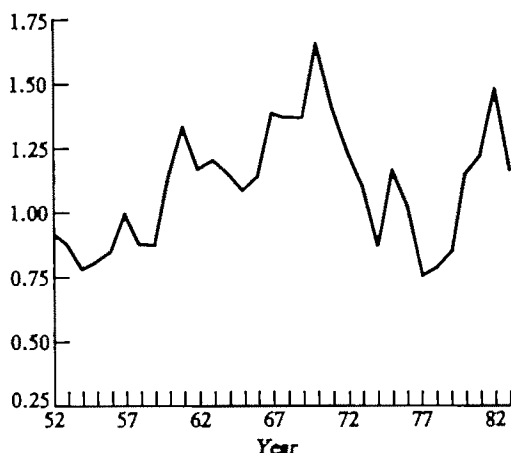
reduction in the variance of profit rates among national economies—the classic tendency toward an equalization of profit rates. By contrast, again holding other factors constant, decreased capital mobility should result in a modulated tendency toward equalization of profit rates and even, perhaps, in a widening variability of profitability among countries.

Evidence is difficult to obtain for these purposes and I have not conducted separate primary research on profit rate variations. There are nonetheless some basic data, constructed in consistent fashion, for net rates of return in manufacturing from 1952 through 1983 among the seven leading advanced countries.¹²⁰ I have calculated the coefficient of variation in manufacturing profitability among these seven countries and plotted the resulting index in Figure 1.

What do the numbers tell us? We would expect a rising coefficient of variation during the period of movement toward the peak of the postwar long swing, particularly as US economic power helped provide some rents accruing to US corporate advantage and as relatively protectionist policies bore economic fruit in Japan. We would then expect diminishing coefficients of variation from the mid sixties into the early seventies as increasing international competition began to threaten US corporate profits and pull it toward the mean of the other advanced countries.

Fig. 1: Intensified Profit Competition?

*Coefficient of Variation of Manufacturing Profitability
in Seven Advanced Countries*



¹²⁰ The data on profitability are expressed as the net before tax rate of profit on the net fixed capital stock for manufacturing and are drawn from Philip Armstrong and Andrew Glyn, 'Accumulation, Profits, State Spending: Data for Advanced Capitalist Countries, 1952-1983,' unpublished tables, Oxford Institute of Economics and Statistics, August 1986, Table 13

The index plotted in Figure I confirms these expectations. But what about the subsequent period? If the NIDL/GOP hypotheses are correct, we should expect a continuing narrowing of profit rates, as a result of increasing international competition, through the early 1980s. But we find, in fact, the opposite, with a sharp increase in the coefficient of variation of manufacturing profit rates from 1977 through 1982.¹²¹ This trend would appear to be more consistent with the SSA-*decay* perspective.¹²²

V. Conclusions

The analysis of the previous section, however schematic, helps clarify some important differences with prevailing views on recent changes in the global economy.¹²³ Two major differences of analytic emphasis seem most important. First, I would argue that we have *not* witnessed movement toward an increasingly 'open' international economy, with productive capital buzzing around the globe, but that we have moved rapidly toward an increasingly 'closed' economy for productive investment, with production and investment decisions increasingly dependent upon a range of institutional policies and activities and a pattern of differentiation and specialization among the countries in the LDCs. The international economy, by the standards of traditional neoclassical and Marxian models of competition, has witnessed *declining* rather than *increasing* mobility of productive capital. Production and investment decisions are less, not more, influenced by pure market signals about short-term cost and price fluctuations. Second, and correspondingly, the role of the State has grown substantially since the early 1970s; state policies have become increasingly decisive on the international front, not more futile. Governments have become more and more involved in active management of monetary policy and interest rates in order to condition exchange rate fluctuations and short-term capital flows. They have become actually and potentially decisive in bargaining over production and investment agreements. And, small consolation though it may be, in an era of spreading monetarist conservatism, everyone

¹²¹ I have not been able to update these data beyond 1983, so I cannot speculate about whether the downturn from 1982 to 1983 reflects the beginning of a more sustained reversal of the 1977-1982 trend.

¹²² Herbert Gintis makes a similar kind of point in reviewing the vast literature on investment determinants within traditional economic analysis, suggesting on balance that 'capital mobility does not appear to sever the link between domestic investment and domestic saving.' I have paid scant attention here to that literature primarily because it does not explicitly discuss *changes over time* in the degree of openness and capital mobility in and among the advanced economies. See Herbert Gintis, 'International Capital Markets and the Validity of National Macroeconomic Models', unpublished paper, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, June 1986 (quote from p. 45).

¹²³ As lengthy as this article remains in this published version, space limitations required deletion of the bulk of a fourth section reporting on a variety of more formal quantitative comparisons of these two perspectives. Some of that analysis is given in 'Global Transformation or Decay? Alternative Perspectives on Recent Changes in the World Economy', in G. Mangum and P. Philips, eds., *The Three Worlds of Labour Economics*, Armonk, NY, 1988.

including transnational corporations has become increasingly dependent upon coordinated state intervention for restructuring and resolution of the underlying dynamics of crisis.¹²⁴

But why the fuss? Some who have seen or heard early versions of this analysis have wondered if I was splitting hairs, emphasizing differences beyond any reasonable proportions. (One friend remarked that he had never known me 'to hang so closely on a second derivative.') I think that these differences in expectations matter, in the end, for political reasons. The NIDL/GOP perspectives have helped foster, in my view, a spreading political fatalism in the advanced countries. If we struggle to extend the frontiers of subsistence and security at home, one gathers, we shall stare balefully at capital's behind, strutting across the continents and seas, leaving us to amuse ourselves with our unrealized dreams of progress and the reality of our diminishing comparative advantage.

I disagree with these political inferences. The breakdown in the postwar system has reflected an erosion of socially determined institutional relationships. TNC responses since the early 1970s reflect their own political and institutional efforts to erect some shelters against the winds of spreading economic instability. The TNCs are neither all-powerful nor fully equipped to shape a new world economy by themselves. They require workers and they require consumers. Workers and consumers helped shape the structure of the postwar system, and we are once again in a position to bargain over institutional transformation. The global economy is up for grabs, not locked into some new and immutable order. The opportunity for enhanced popular power remains ripe.

¹²⁴ Bennett Harrison has suggested to me that there may be an asymmetry in state capacity between situations in which the state directly intervenes to promote accumulation—e.g. South Korea—and those in which it intervenes directly to promote working-class interests—e.g. France in 1981–83. This is an important point which warrants much further discussion. At first glance, I think it depends critically on the sorts of policies which the state pursues in either case. I look forward to further exploration of these issues.

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Simon Bromley
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After Exterminism

The signing of an INF Treaty at the Washington Summit of December 1987 has brought to a symbolic (if illusory) close a dramatic episode in postwar history.* It will not, it seems, mark a decisive reversal in the nuclear arms race. Compensatory adjustments, on the NATO side at least, and the US determination to develop a new generation of space-based weaponry will probably carry the military competition forward into a qualitatively new round, while sea-based systems will take over the strategic roles of Cruise and Pershing II.¹ It will not represent the recovery of a European popular sovereignty against superpower occupation, or the emergence of a progressive 'third way' in the political alignments of the international community. The Thatcher and Kohl governments came unwillingly, and under strong American pressure, to an acceptance of the deal; and they looked ahead not to dealignment and denuclearization but rather to the coalescence of a European nuclear pillar of NATO. It may not even be the solid foundation it appears for improved superpower relations. The failure of the Summit to

show any progress on resolving superpower disputes in the Third World was suggested by contradictory indications of Soviet policy on Afghanistan. Certainly, any return in the near future to the cold war virulence of the early 80s seems unlikely; nevertheless, the political significance of the agreement for the two governments is hugely discrepant; and the underlying goals of US policy—nuclear superiority and global confrontation—have not perceptibly, or even officially, altered. But despite all this, and paradoxically, the INF Treaty will bring about the fulfilment of the central political demand which since 1979 has generated and united a peace movement of unprecedented proportions across Western Europe.

I. The Challenge of the Nuclear Arms Race

To the uncertain significance of the event itself, therefore, must be added the series of ambiguities which it highlights concerning the impact of the peace movement in the eight years from the 'Twin Track' decision of December 1979 to the Washington Summit of December 1987. For the withdrawal of Cruise, Pershing II and the SS-20s will take place *after* the effective political defeat of anti-nuclear protest in every relevant European country. And the initiative for disarmament has come not from NATO governments, the prime object of the peace movements' attentions, but from the USSR.

There can be no easy answer to the question 'Has the peace movement succeeded or failed?' There are, however, other related questions which may more legitimately be asked at the formal conclusion of the INF drama. The official (and much disputed) rationale for the NATO 'modernization' was the need to counter Soviet deployment of the SS-20. The insistence was disingenuous, but it encouraged a popular suspicion that the nuclear arms race was proceeding according to its own reciprocal dynamic, and had passed beyond the ability of political actors on either side to control. In turn, this very autonomy of nuclear accumulation—together with the irreducibility of the universal threat which it posed—seemed to argue both the necessity and the possibility of a distinct non-aligned politics of protest which could disrupt the process by removing its European focus of confrontation: because the military aspect of the conflict was irrationally self-determining—rather than rooted in a complex and persistent historical contradiction of social systems—a single-issue campaign to block INF deployment could be seen as engaging directly with the dynamics of the nuclear arms race.

Such an analysis, exemplified in the writings of Edward Thompson, has indeed been fundamental to the practice of the resurgent peace movement of the 1980s. However, this analysis is not simply a recruiting convenience; for it is interdependent with two further claims about the agency and strategy of disarmament which sharply distinguish its politics

* We are grateful for discussions and clarifications during the preparation of this article with Elena Lieven, Mike Rustin, Mark Thompson and Fiona Weir. We are especially indebted to Ken Coates for extensive discussions on an earlier draft, which led to considerable revisions. Dorothy and Edward Thompson were also kind enough to discuss an earlier draft with us at great length.

1 D. Johnstone, *The Politics of Eurocommunism*, London 1984, p.190

from those of the traditional Left. The first of these is that expanded public *consciousness* of the nuclear threat may constitute the basis of a sustained transformative political mobilization irreducible to issues of class, and not resting on a comparable endemic conflict of material interest. The second is that while unable to exploit an immediate interdependence comparable to that which chains capital to labour, the peace movement nevertheless finds its own terrain of political struggle—'public opinion' and, secondarily, the corpus of civil rights—on which to advance its goals—the return of a non-nuclear government, the physical obstruction of deployment, etc.

In several respects Britain was exceptional among the deployment countries: it possessed its own 'independent' nuclear weapons; and, partly as a result, its major peace movement, the CND, had a strong national inflection and was less inclined to act or think as part of a wider European opposition. However, the composition of its social base, and its broad ideological orientation, mirrored those of its continental counterparts. The membership of CND exhibited a high degree of social heterogeneity, though it was heavily skewed towards the white collar/professional segments of the population, manual workers made up a mere 5 per cent, and students accounted for 20 per cent. By contrast with the traditional Left, the representation of women has been very high. Similarly the ideological orientation of the movement's activist base has been extremely diverse. While elements of the social democratic and communist Left have found a place in the mobilization, much of the momentum derived from a more generalized counter-cultural critique: affinities with the ecological movement (itself recently boosted by the Three Mile Island incident of March 1979), Protestant religious groupings and the women's movement have been especially marked. In Britain the Churches have not provided the institutional underpinning of the peace movement as they have in Holland and to a lesser extent in West Germany; but it was here that the alliance with the women's movement was exemplified (from March 1982) in the camps at Greenham Common and the 30,000-strong women's demonstration which encircled the base in December 1982.

The diverse character of the peace movement, combined with its overlapping links with the other social movements that had been transforming the political scene since the late '60s, encouraged many in the belief that a distinctive 'new' politics was emerging to displace the 'old' class politics. And certainly the movement displayed immense creativity in finding new and dramatic ways of influencing public opinion, and in mobilizing completely new categories of political support that had not been reached by the constricted parliamentary and union politics of the orthodox Left: if local membership is included, then by 1983 CND members (250,000) were probably as numerous as those of the Labour Party. Of the national membership two-thirds were not members of unions; and while 70 per cent were Labour voters, 74 per cent did not belong to any particular party. The sheer rate of expansion was also impressive: in 1979 CND had little over 4,000 members; up to the end of 1983 it increased by an average 100 per cent per year. And its October demonstrations (resuming in 1980) drew 60,000, 250,000 and 400,000. This was of course paralleled in Europe:

the climactic month in October 1983 saw demonstrations of over 200,000 in Rome, Brussels and the Hague, while a string of actions in West Germany involved protestors totalling some one million.

The non-party-political emphasis of the grass-roots was also fortified by memories of the long-standing unreliability of the Labour Party. But the consequent notion that the peace movement constituted itself independently and then revived the parliamentary debate by the external pressures it was able to muster is misleadingly simplistic. Like Social Democratic and Eurocommunist parties across Europe, the Atlanticist Labour leadership found itself faced in the late 70s with a growing internal challenge. As early as 1974, with the appointment by the NEC of the Defence Study Group, the nuclear issue became increasingly enmeshed with the struggle for inner-party democracy. During the Party's internal crisis of 1979-81 'defence was perhaps the policy area most often cited by the reformers'.² Indeed the first national anti-Cruise demonstration, attended by 20,000 people in June 1980, was organized through the Labour Party. Moreover, from November of that year, following the lead of Manchester City Council, Labour-controlled authorities all over the country declared Nuclear Free Zones. By 1983 there were over 150 of these, and it was they, significantly, who were responsible for the British peace movement's largest tangible success: the cancellation of the Hard Rock civil defence exercise of February 1982.

From the start, the peace movement mobilization derived its urgency from the immediacy and concreteness of the threat which it confronted. It came into being with a unifying aim (the obstruction of INF deployment), a deadline (December 1983) and the ever-present stimulus of alternating bellicose and fearful pronouncements by leading public figures. Its short-term agenda was thus simple enough: 'We must protest if we are to survive. Protest is the only form of civil defence'.³ But to all those for whom the vigour of the campaign was emblematic of a 'new' politics, the issue was suffused with a more ambitious question: how this mass of popular dissent might be transformed from a *symptom* of the crisis in relations within and between the military blocs into the effective *agent* both of their dissolution and of the promotion of an international order in Europe which would no longer rest on the threat of mutual destruction. Now, even to begin to think about this sensibly would require an international perspective in order to conceive the geopolitical conditions of a denuclearized continent. But here the national characteristics (referred to above) of the British campaign were a considerable handicap. To compound matters further, the Labour Left opposition in Britain, even while it decried subservience to the US, sustained a more or less thinly veiled ideological hostility to EC membership, portraying it as a brake on independent British political transformation.

² P. Byrd, 'The Development of the Peace Movement in Britain', in *The Peace Movements in Europe and the United States*, ed. W. Kalhöfener & R. Pfalzgraff, Beckenham 1985, p. 94. Except where otherwise indicated the figures quoted are taken from Peter Noss' 1982 survey of CND membership, cited in Byrd.

³ E. P. Thompson and D. Smith eds, *Protest and Survival*, Harmondsworth 1980, p. 30.

It is not therefore surprising that while the peace movement could occasionally draw on considerable popular resentment over the terms of the 'special relationship' (notably in the debates over 'dual key')—leading to quite radical anti-NATO resolutions at CND conferences—this tended to be channelled not into anticipation of alternative, pan-European political and security arrangements, but rather into even more implausible scenarios of solitary non-alignment. Although the INF deployment never commanded more than minority support (and CND was able to construct a positive majority *against*), support for the British deterrent (in the sense of opposition to unilateral nuclear disarmament) never fell much below two thirds.⁴ This insularity may be contrasted with West Germany (FRG) where the division of Europe is pivotal to a real (if beneath the surface) alternative foreign policy debate: whether some form of demilitarization plus detente/opening to eastern markets is more advantageous than a revived domestic military-industrial complex dominating West European defence arrangements/sectors, fuelled/legitimated by the Soviet Threat.⁵

The END Perspective

Seen in this light, the appeal for European Nuclear Disarmament (the END Appeal) launched in London in April 1980 was both more sophisticated and more utopian than the characteristic perspective of CND. It was more sophisticated in that it recognized an *international* politics of the nuclear threat (the Cold War), advanced a broad geopolitical solution (the denuclearization and reunification of Europe) and advocated a prefigurative, internationalist strategy for the peace movement: a mushrooming of political, individual, professional, religious and organizational contacts between the citizenry of East and West which would undermine the legitimacy of Cold War politics on both sides, progressively dissolving the international rationale of governmental resistance to the simultaneous and growing popular demands for denuclearization. 'We must commence to act as if a united, neutral and pacific Europe already exists.'⁶ Some of the principal features of the appeal's utopianism will be explored in more detail below. But one such feature with immediate practical consequences was its emergence in Britain at all. How far the European identity which it summoned was lacking here may be indicated by the fact that although it was issued under the auspices of CND, it soon produced a splinter organization (END) which has since existed in an uncertain relation to CND. 'Although END's supporters . . . are numerically slight compared with CND, the organization constitutes the intellectual base of the British peace movement and represents its place within a broader European movement.'⁷ Byrd's characterization captures well the self-image of END, but not perhaps the extent of its anomaly. . . .

Despite this circumstance, END's perspective has a direct relevance to any discussion of the aspirant political agency of the Western peace

4 Byrd, pp 94–96

5 Johnston, pp 187–89

6 Reprinted in *Protest and Survival*, p 223

7 Byrd, p 74

movement. For, from its distinctively non-aligned position it has not only provided (in Edward Thompson's writings on Exterminism) the most elaborate activist/internal theorization of the possible role of the Europe-wide independent peace movement—and, incidentally, one to which the Northern European movements have been far more receptive than any domestic audience (especially in Holland and West Germany)⁸; it has also attempted consistently to 'think' the developments and opportunities of the last eight years from within this internationalist politics of the peace movement. As a result an analysis of END's own political trajectory should allow us to reach some broader conclusions about both the strengths and liabilities of the necessary utopianism of the mobilization as a whole.

Thus we propose to consider the implicit and explicit claim of the European Peace Movement: that a mass mobilization of popular protest against the deployment of INF could constitute itself as a political agency capable of arresting the nuclear arms race. Specifically we shall argue: (a) that this claim rests upon a series of assumptions about international politics which form a generic ideology conditioned by the distinctive needs and dilemmas of peace movement politics; (b) that during the height of the Second Cold War these generic assumptions of peace movement ideology found a powerful correspondence with apparent trends in East-West relations which hugely fortified both the vigour of the mobilization and the scale of its aspiration—a correspondence which is characterized as 'the moment of Exterminism'; (c) that the passing of this moment brings for the peace movement not only a numerical decline in its membership, but also an involuntary dislocation of its strategic thinking and practice as the political dynamics of the arms race increasingly diverge from the course charted by the peace movement's ideological characterization of them.

II. Exterminist Blocs and Peace-making Social Movements

The projected deployment of the Cruise and Pershing II missiles was seen above all as initiating a dangerous new escalation of the arms race centred in Europe. However, the secretive form in which the NATO decision was taken and announced, combined with the increasingly bellicose rhetoric of the Reagan Administration and the stubborn Soviet response, had two additional profound political consequences that overlay the more general peace movement perceptions of the arms race noted above. In the first instance, there emerged a deep feeling in Europe that its security, and ultimately its survival, was merely a plaything in superpower hands (European states were merely components of superpower dominated nuclear blocs). Second, and standing in a somewhat ambiguous relation to this, there was an increasingly clear perception that European citizens lacked any meaningful democratic control over the military policies of the European allies (military and nuclear accumulation was premised on the domestic suppression of the people's rights).

⁸ Johnstone, pp.64-65

It was to this alarming moment (resonating at once with convergent democratic, geopolitical, *and* nuclear concerns) that Edward Thompson addressed his original theses on Exterminism. Thompson's first formulation of 'Exterminism' was an urgent appeal for action, directed primarily to a Marxist audience, at a time when a dramatic escalation in the deployment of new weapons systems in Europe visibly intensified the domestic political and international symptoms of a Cold War malaise which Thompson had consistently identified as the intractable obstacle to the emergence of a progressive, democratic socialist politics.¹⁰ This circumstance perhaps accounts for three of his statement's most distinctive components: (1) the metaphorical elucidation of the nuclear threat in terms of something very like a mode of production, dragging a hapless political superstructure through a series of escalations and confrontations, propelled by the developing nuclear forces of production; (2) the explicit conviction that the reciprocity of exterminism at its Soviet and American poles entailed that no initiative could emerge from either establishment to undermine its dynamic; and (3) the conflation of this geopolitical confrontation (around a divided Europe) between two blocs of states with an equally barren contest of capitalist and neo-Stalinist social ideologies—whose respective appropriation of the categories of freedom and peace sustains an equally repressive conceptual partition of the democratic socialist ideal. This conflation is carried over into the posited alternative: a reunified (denuclearized) Europe whose internal constitution would resolve the false Cold War dichotomy of socialism and democracy, and whose non-aligned foreign policy would provide the means of dissolving the dangerous bipolarity in which the global state-system is imprisoned.

'Exterminism' insisted that the logic of the arms race (and indeed of the US-Soviet antagonism—the two are not distinguished) is no longer analysable 'in terms of [historical] origins, intentions or goals, contradictions and conjunctures'.¹¹ It should be seen rather as a 'gathering determinism'¹² generated by the confrontation of two collocations of fragmented forces that are interlocked in a mutually aggravating antagonism. For the 'Cold War passed, long ago, into a self-generating condition of Cold War-ism (exterminism), in which the originating drives, reactions and intentions are still at play, but within a general inertial

9 'Notes on Exterminism, the Last State of Civilization', originally in *New Left Review* 121, May-June 1980; reprinted in E.P. Thompson et al. *Exterminism and Cold War*, London 1982. And for Thompson's continuing elaboration of this perspective, see also *Zero Option* (hereafter ZO), London 1982, *Double Exposure* (DE), London 1983; *The Henry Dancers* (HD), London 1983. In order to avoid confusion in what follows, we shall use 'Exterminism/ist' to indicate the theoretical perspective, and 'exterminism/ist' for the tendency it aims to identify. Thompson has noted that 'I wrote the "Notes on Exterminism" directly after *Protest & Survival* and it was directed at the political immobilism of Western Marxist intellectuals' (personal communication to the authors, October 1987).

10 Powerful evocations of the trials of living a socialist internationalism squeezed between the 'Natopolitan' and Stalinist juggernauts can be found in 'An Open Letter to Lszek Kolakowski' (1973) and 'Outside the Whale' (1960)—both reprinted in *The Poverty of Theory*, London 1978; but the strains undoubtedly reach back beyond the departure from the CP (1956), through Stalin's denunciation of Tito (1947) and into a lost Europeanism of the mid-40s which remains the strongest positive touchstone of Thompson's internationalist thinking. Cf. also P. Anderson *Arguments Within English Marxism*, London 1980, pp. 142-46.

11 'Notes', p. 3.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

condition'.¹³ Moreover the military-ideological confrontation of the blocs in Europe is the 'locus of the field-of-force'¹⁴ of world politics and the core of international tension from which cold war hostilities are exported to peripheral theatres in the Third World. Thus, despite the many conflicts located outside Europe and the shared hostility of the superpowers to any third path of socio-economic development, the root and dynamic of the superpower conflict has become quite simply the increasingly automatic self-reproduction of the antagonism itself—driven by an endless series of 'worst-case' analyses and resting upon a bureaucratically fixed set of material interests ('a permanent war economy') coupled with a socio-psychological need for internal bonding based on the exclusion of a paradigmatic Other ('a permanent enemy hypothesis').¹⁵ Finally, unlike other modes of production, exterminism does not generate an internal contradiction of progressive change, but rather proceeds (if not interrupted) through a 'non-dialectical contradiction' to 'mutually aggravated destruction'.¹⁶

There are two points worth noting here about this interpretation. First, the denial of any objective grounds of conflict has the dramatic effect of reifying 'the bomb' both as an 'agent of its own 'cycles of self-expansion' and as the embodiment of alienated social relations (between power and democratic aspiration) which it typically reproduces in the Cold War suspension of progressive political change: 'Weapons, it turns out, are political agents also.'¹⁷ No doubt this partly accounts for the tremendous affective impact of Exterminism. Moreover, this same denial lends an air of brittleness and unreality to the Cold War itself, as if a popular reappropriation of democratic rights would itself dissolve the blocs; as recently as July 1987 Thompson still portrayed the Cold War as 'already dead . . . dragging out a posthumous existence on the life-support system of militarism'.¹⁸ The generic interdependence in peace movement ideology between an insistence on the causal autonomy of the arms race and the possibility of its rupture by decisive popular intervention is very strongly marked here.

What are the implications of all this for progressive forces facing the deepening militarization of the European continent? First, since the Cold War reproduces itself around the division of Europe a challenge to that division strikes at the heart of exterminism. Second, because of the mutual antagonism of the blocs in which one side's hawks feed off those of the other there is no possibility of state-led initiatives emerging to break the impasse, and only independent movements from within the blocs can challenge the reciprocal logic of this dynamic. Third, this same logic dictates that an opposition cannot fight off the manipulation of the Other and escape the internal bonding of the Cold War system unless it is linked with similar movements on the other side—each creating the possibility of the other's ideological and organizational

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.27.

¹⁵ DE, p.147.

¹⁶ 'Notes', p.26

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10

¹⁸ Speech to the closing plenary of the END Convention, Coventry, 18.7.87—a version of which appeared in *The Guardian*, 27.7.87.

independence. Fourth, the nature of the universal ecological threat prescribes a broad-based populist response, not only because exterminism threatens indiscriminately, but also because it proceeds by abrogating the democratic control of individuals as citizens over the military policies of their governments— 'a prior condition for the extermination of European peoples is the extermination of open democratic process.'¹⁹

Central to this vision is a conception of the struggles by which exterminism might be transformed in terms not of antagonistic classes, but rather of exterminist blocs and peace-making social movements. This is perhaps to be understood also as the price of mobilizing a broad coalition; but it does seem a curious opposition, and the significance of both halves of this couplet (which define respectively the strategy and the agency of disarmament) need to be explored.

First, then, one might ask: what about the nuclear states which compose those blocs, whose policies sustain the arsenals' growth, and against which any pressure for change must inevitably be pitted? It is of course perfectly legitimate for the peace movement to challenge the international hegemony of the blocs; indeed, in the ideological bipolarity of Cold War only a genuinely internationalist revival can ensure the independence of the peace movement. But that imperative does not resolve the ambiguities of an opposition strategy. For the formulation of the task of the peace movement in terms of military blocs versus social movements repeats the conflation of political and geopolitical conflicts referred to above: exterminism represses both the democratic rights of 'the people' and the self-determination of 'peoples', and thus calls forth both a radical democratic and a nationalist counter-discourse of mobilization. ('European Nuclear Disarmament . . . will be an act of self-determination.'²⁰ Additionally of course, the ecological threat to 'people' adds its own stream to this oppositional swell.)

These two discourses need not contradict each other; indeed, as Anderson has remarked, the historical high points of Thompson's political experience (the anti-fascist popular front of the '30s and '40s, '1936', the early years of CND, etc.) have typically exhibited 'attraction rather than tension between its national and international poles'.²¹ But their co-existence in a single project does require a kind of conceptual 'exclusion zone' around the idea of the state: within that zone the question as to whether the state is an undifferentiated component of exterminism or potentially the vehicle of an act of self-determination which will undermine it must be kept open—as the emphasis on blocs allows. This not only enables the confluence of nationalist and radical democratic sentiments, but also makes it credible that a democratic mobilization can have consequences at the inter-state level (via a transformed state with redirected policies)—and can thus be the means whereby the agency of the peace movement can be transferred to the international terrain of the threat which it confronts. If the question is closed in either direction this possibility disappears, cancelled either by an anarch-

¹⁹ 'Notes', p. 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹ Anderson, p. 146.

ist refusal of engagement with state structures or (as in the case of CND) by an exclusively national campaign which poses no challenge to the international supports of its own military-industrial complex. But the exclusion zone carries its own risks; for it suspends analysis of existing state strategies at the particular conjuncture of world politics whose ambiguities defined the plausibility of its attendant mobilizing vision; and it thereby seals off the means of knowing if and when it is construing subsequent developments misleadingly in terms of the options, categories and transitional demands of that last conjuncture. A recognition of the point at which the vision thus becomes disabling and requires fundamental reassessment is obviously of great importance.

The Politics of Nuclear De-escalation

Moving to the second half of the couplet, the ambiguities and dangers here are equally pronounced. The Exterminist analysis sees the peace movement as a more or less spontaneous protest which constitutes itself as a distinct political agency engaged in a citizens' campaign of detente from below. The nature of this campaign is defined precisely by the immobilism of the blocs: a monolithic establishment consensus enforces the organizational independence of the peace movement from existing political parties, and makes the exchange between such autonomous groups in East and West as the dominant level of peace movement politics?

Yet the history of the emergence of the European peace movement shows that left political parties have played and continue to play a vital role in constituting its organizational form, formulating its strategic goals and embodying the concrete processes of East-West reconciliation through the pursuit of a non-aligned democratic socialism.²² For the crucial enabling factor (in addition to the immobilism of the blocs) which Exterminism ignores is the political space created for such a movement by the deep divisions within the West European establishments, brought about by the Twin Track decision. Specifically, substantial elements of European social democracy were beginning to question Cold War Atlanticism (adding weight to the increasingly non-aligned potential of Eurocommunism), while on some parts of the Right too, American nuclear strategy was viewed with unease. Thus the national division which the Twin Track decision finally triggered was not a horizontal one between mainstream political structures and an emergent social and ideological base of anti-nuclear concern, but rather a vertical one between Cold War forces and an oppositional swell in which the social movement found its necessary organizational form in, and simultaneously radicalized, the policies of the opposition parties.

In many respects the practice of END reflects the main outlines of the

²² For some relevant discussions of this process see, Ken Coates ed., *Detente and Socialist Democracy*, Nottingham 1975, idem, *Heracles*, Nottingham 1982, and *Listening For Peace*, Nottingham 1987

Exterminist perspective.²³ It endorses (from an activist standpoint) the isomorphic analysis of the Cold War, and seeks to sustain a vigorously independent challenge to both blocs based on a vision of a non-aligned, reunified Europe as the key to the diffusion of East-West tensions. As a national organization it argues for an alternative British foreign policy consisting in moves towards non-provocative defence, a non-aligned policy towards the Third World and a new and expanded *Ostpolitik* which would include economic, political and military dimensions. And as a decentralized network of 'working groups' it attempts to maintain support for independent democratic oppositions in the East as a means of furthering the citizens' 'detente from below'.

Both the Western and East European aspects of END strategy have been focussed on the mobilization of the kind of ambiguities mentioned above. While the calls for an alternative foreign policy, and the more radical challenge to the elite formulation of such policy might be seen as respectively the short and longer-term goals of the movement, on closer examination their guiding assumptions are profoundly interdependent. The construction of an independent, non-aligned British foreign policy presupposes a break with the determination of such policy by Cold War forces; and (given the impossibility of progressive state-led initiatives) this could be carried through only under the auspices of a radical democratic movement. Indeed, it is difficult to see how, without such a proviso, the reunification of Europe would not be suffused with darker consequences for the East-West confrontation—how, in short, the proposed *Ostpolitik* would not simply be 'rollback' by another name. The possibility of detaching Eastern Europe from Soviet hegemony by such a strategy was, of course, hardly foreign to the minds of American policy-makers in the early 1970s. The very notion that an *Ostpolitik* could be a priority of British (rather than, say, just West German) foreign policy depends upon a context of heightened Cold War tensions in which the alternative historical agenda of the peace movement commands widespread popular support because it engages directly with the major current, contested preoccupations of state policy. (Conversely, its objective plausibility inevitably diminishes as the relaxation of tensions displaces Cold War issues from the policy agenda and diffuses the pressure for an alternative foreign policy.)

Something similar can be said of the engagement with groups in the East. In one sense this rests squarely on Thompson's premise that 'so long as each bloc's resistance movement can be categorized as the "ally" of the Other, it will be easily contained by the forces of exterminism.'²⁴ So there must be a detente from below: but does this mean creating the popular base for state policies of international reconciliation, or contesting the 'prohibitions and limitations imposed by any national state' on a 'European-wide campaign in which every kind of exchange

²³ Occasionally the Exterminist perspective is invoked explicitly. 'We know that the leaders of the USA and the USSR are not really free agents. They are creatures of what Edward Thompson calls the deep structures of exterminism' M. Kaldor, 'The Nearly Men', *END Journal* Editorial, Dec/Jan 86/87

²⁴ 'Notes', p 30

takes place'²⁵ Obviously the latter is entailed directly in practice even though the former must never—insofar as END wishes to remain a peace movement—be totally eclipsed; but because of the degree of state repression on the one hand and the politics of intra-peace movement relations on the other, things are likely to get held up at the stage of demands for an expanded civil society, and the pressures for that to be regarded as an end in itself (since it challenges the anti-democratic axis of exterminism) are strengthened. Nevertheless, the cogency of the Exterminist position still rests on the assumption that de-escalatory international consequences are involved: the frequent attempts by END²⁶ to involve the rest of the British peace movement in further activities of international exchange only make sense if there are grounds for members of a single-issue campaign to believe that a commitment to human rights in Eastern Europe contributes directly to their anti-nuclear goals.²⁷ And the strategic efficacy of the connection between human rights and disarmament (sustained by END on moral as well as practical grounds) may actually be only temporary.

The Moment of 'Exterminism'

There are numerous further questions which could be asked of this perspective. For example: what exactly is the provenance of the much vaunted 'civil society' which the 'detente from below' seeks to promote? In a weak sense, of course, it refers to a non-governmental political realm in which the citizenry may combine lawfully and mount demonstrations of protest against state policy, bringing to bear whatever legitimate pressures it can muster. Thus Thompson on Soviet society: 'I cannot see how the peaceful disposition of these citizens can be, in any emergency, an effective restraint upon government.'²⁸ There appears to be no ready explanation of how what is in many respects the most expansive civil society on earth—the social formation of the United States—co-exists rather unproblematically with the world's most heavily armed state. On the other hand 'civil society' is also frequently invoked as an alternative socio-political order for Europe prefigured in the humanistic and anti-militarist ideology of the peace movement.²⁹ The

25 END Appeal, in *Protest and Survival*, p 225.

26 Cf. for example, Thompson's appeal to the October '81 CND rally in Hyde Park, reprinted in ZO, especially p 121.

27 We owe this point to Elena Loeven.

28 DE, p 111.

29 For a recent comprehensive restatement of this position see M. Kaldor, 'A New Europe', *END Journal* Editorial, Oct/Nov 1987, worth citing at some length: '... a Europe based on advanced weaponry, hi-tech collaboration and consumerism is not really an indigenous European creation. Rather it is a (Western) Europe modelled on the American example, built in America's cultural image. ... The peace movement's political task is to realise the *other* idea of Europe—a Europe which encompasses East and West. ... Opposing the Cold War, overcoming East-West conflict, also means becoming a movement for European self-determination. The essence of the Cold War in Europe is occupation by outside forces. ... Our East European friends use the concept of civil society to mean a *political culture* which is independent of the state, and is an essential precondition for the functioning of democracy. Fundamentally this, I believe, is what is meant by the recreation of a European culture—a sense of identity and self-confidence which allows for an indigenous political process. ... A new idea of Europe would, of course, include European traditions—especially the humanist notion of individual rights. ... But it would also have to be rebuilt through the ideas and practice of new pan-European social movements, including peace, green, feminist, human rights and third-world solidarity groups' etc.

outlines of this utopia are, it must be said, perpetually unclear—rarely going beyond programmatic lists of human rights and dignities. Are property rights to be included among such dignities—or indeed rights to medical care or useful employment?

That said, it is of course natural that popular movements discover a generic and intensely practical concern with civil liberties; and an internationalist practice is bound to enhance the importance of such liberties. In any case, the importance of Exterminism was not that it provided an accurate analysis. What *was* significant about it was rather that, more than any other perspective current in Britain at the time it *intuited* the ideological dynamics of the popular mobilization and developed them to envision a means whereby the peace movement, through a democratic challenge to existing states, could simultaneously confront the nuclear threat on the international terrain where the putative reciprocal dynamic of accumulation operated. Its utopianism was of a piece with that of the political practice which it articulated: '... in a sense, as in all political explorations, we are *trying to find out*. If you are too certain—and decry this [peace movement project] as utopian—you could be resisting the very conceptual revolution you want.'³⁰ It answered to what we can indeed describe as the moment of Exterminism: both blocs were deploying new and escalatory weapons systems in their respective client states; the focus of the military and ideological antagonism was very clearly on Europe—as was the destructive threat which it invoked; neither side seemed to show any interest in serious arms negotiations; popular movements were relentlessly identified as agents of the Other by the military-ideological establishments of each bloc. This very immobilism of the blocs magnified the potential significance of an interruption of the escalation in Europe; even one state in Europe successfully rejecting Cruise could, it seemed, initiate the dissolution of the blocs; and the scale of the anti-nuclear mobilization made it appear conceivable that a popular democratic explosion could force that rejection, thereby striking a blow to the heart of exterminism. All at once, Europe seemed to have become both the most dangerous and the weakest link in the Cold War.

III. Nuclear States and the International Class Struggle

Some further consequences of these ambiguities may be illuminated by comparing this perspective, its theoretical premisses and strategic implications, with a more orthodox interpretation of the arms race. The purpose of such a comparison is to provide not a measure against which to *assess* the analytical adequacy of Exterminism, but rather a means of throwing into clear relief the conceptual framework which Thompson offers for comprehending the Cold War and the possibilities of its dissolution. Viewed from a Marxist perspective, the Cold War is not a disembodied ideological façade waiting to be shattered by insurgent peace movements, but rather a reflection of a very real and dynamic conflict of classes, alternative social systems and the states which embody such forces. Thus Halliday, for example, modifies an international class struggle analysis to include both the conflict between the rival

³⁰ Personal communication to the authors, October 1987

superpowers (in particular the ideological and geopolitical bipolarity which this enforces within and between other states in the global system) and the specific implications for military strategy of the deployment of nuclear weapons.³¹ For Halliday the nuclear nature of the conflict, and the fact that it is refracted through a state-system organized around the superpowers, means that what remains essentially the Great Contest—i.e. capitalism versus communism as alternative social systems—continually reproduces on the 'surface' of world politics the arms races, competition in the Third World and ideological offensives which Thompson portrays as the self-perpetuating dynamics of exterminism. Moreover, a close examination of the arms race reveals the overwhelming weight of conventional military spending—implying not an idle militarism irrationally feeding off itself, but a calculated preparation and use of military force for the pursuit of determinate political strategies, specifically in the Third World. And the dynamic of the nuclear arms race itself, far from being reducible to the reciprocal promptings of military-industrial complexes and a barren ideological confrontation, is regulated by the Great Contest inasmuch as nuclear superiority is seen as the means of freeing conventional force from the paralysis of MAD. Thus, while a certain specificity is accorded to the arms race, it is largely interpreted as a subordinate component of systemic conflict in general (rather than vice versa), and Cold War conjunctures in particular.³²

In addition to discerning a rational kernel in the arms race, such an analysis also suggests a rather different focus for any strategy concerned to break the springs of military escalation and confrontation. For if the arms race is seen as primarily a function of the Cold War, then the priority must be to weaken the grip of the systemic conflict across the globe. Thus Halliday argued that a non-nuclear, independent Western Europe could subvert the logic of the Cold War in three interrelated ways: 'by reducing the strategic power of the USA, by undermining the legitimation for the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe, and by loosening the bipolar dynamic that grips the third world'.³³

On the face of it, this project might seem to be closely related to the vision of END—indeed Halliday does accord a marked significance to the resurgence of the peace movement, and the overlap in the shared aspiration to a democratic socialist Europe (Western or reunified) is self-evident.³⁴ But because Halliday sees the Cold War as a conjuncture within the general systemic conflict, a radical democratic peace movement cannot on its own be the agent of its dissolution—the predicament is not primarily sustained by the cancellation of democratic prerogatives and national/political rights but by the reproduction of class antagonisms in and through state strategies. Thus the respective democratic socialist projects differ in their strategic implications: for Halliday the transformation of the balance of class power—which underpins state strategies—

31 F. Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, London 1983, pp 28–30.

32 For a detailed discussion of this point see *ibid.*, pp 47–55, and M. Davis, 'Nuclear Imperialism and Extended Deterrence', in *Exterminism and Cold War*, pp 52–60.

33 Halliday, p 264, and for an interesting account of the domestic political configuration which might accompany such a strategy see M. Rustin, 'Towards a Socialist Foreign Policy', in *For a Pluralist Socialism*, London 1984.

34 Halliday, pp 252–53.

is the central precondition both for a relaxation of Cold War tensions and a broader challenge to the global grip of the systemic conflict. Specifically, a strengthening of the labour movement and other forces of the Left within the states of Western Europe, in order to elect radical socialist governments committed to a thorough-going social transformation and nuclear disarmament, could provide the necessary movement for a decisive transformation of class relations on a global scale; whereas for Thompson, as we have seen, the radical-democratic recovery of citizens' power—both to dissolve the militarist grip on foreign and defence policy and to assert national self-determination—directly confronts the exterminist threat to human survival.

There is a further point which should be remarked here. Underlying Halliday's account is a conception of states as neither 'mere epiphenomena', nor 'the sole or ultimately determinant factors' of international politics, but rather as 'the institutionalized expression and instruments of class rule', such that the contradictions of social forces and social systems are embodied in and projected through state strategies.³⁵ While we might suggest that the specificity accorded to the action of states deserves further theoretical explication, this conception does at least entail that because the latter are seen as involved in a conflict which is not simply about itself, they are also seen as having goals, and hence also strategies in pursuit of those goals. These strategies may evolve as the conditions and opportunities of successive conjunctures dictate and allow, and this lends considerable flexibility to the interpretation: the analysis of the conflict and goals can survive the assimilation of dramatic shifts in strategy since the three are not conflated to begin with.

The question posed in the introduction remains: how far has the Exterminist analysis enabled END to remain a relevant and progressive voice when the underlying currents which produced the war scare of the early '80s carry the relationship between East and West into a less overtly confrontational phase?

IV. From Containment to Global Confrontation: A Reading of State Strategies

The Marxist position described above also offers a reading of the *current* conjuncture in superpower and West European politics which again highlights the peculiarities of the Exterminist analysis.³⁶ In the domain of superpower relations there have been three broad developments that have altered the character of the Second Cold War. In the first place the three central Cold War aims of Reaganomics, military-Keynesian stimulated economic growth, the suppression of intra-Western economic conflicts and the application of pressure on the Soviet economy through a competitive arms race, had all either failed or backfired by 1985. Indeed, the American budget and trade deficits—whatever their long-term impact on the domestic economy—have resulted in both a sharpening of inter-imperialist rivalries, rather than their suppression, and

35 F. Halliday, 'The Conjuncture of the Seventies and After: Reply to Ouguard', NLR 147, p 77.

36 The major outlines of this position were set out by Fred Halliday in his presentation to the END Seminar ('The Peace Movement in the post New Cold War World') at the LSE, 27.6.87.

Congressional pressure on the defence budget. Second, while the USSR has been concerned to disentangle itself from risky Third World engagements (though it continues to support many allies), the American attempt to return to 'Clausewitzian' principles by gaining a decisive advantage in the strategic field, combined with the application of the Reagan Doctrine in the Third World, proceeds more or less unabated with domestic bipartisan support.³⁷ Nonetheless, despite the expectations aroused at the start of the '80s, and the awesome conventional build-up and the expansion of covert activity, the Reagan Administrations have proved unable to revive direct US military intervention in the Third World as a visibly effective instrument of foreign policy. US counter-revolutionary operations have failed to overthrow existing regimes (Grenada excepted) and this is likely to remain the case in the absence of direct intervention—which American public opinion will not at present countenance. The third factor undermining Cold War bellicosity has been the conjunction of an increasingly 'lame-duck', post-Irangate Administration with a dynamic new Soviet leadership which placed a sweeping programme of bilateral nuclear disarmament proposals at the centre of its foreign policy agenda, and which was prepared to make large concessions in order to achieve them. Gorbachev's disarmament initiatives have put the West on the defensive, making it more difficult for the US to break out of the nuclear impasse of parity and regain strategic superiority.

Though the failure of American strategy is thus increasingly apparent, the outcome of the current transitional phase of international politics is still uncertain. For in order to overcome domestic opposition Gorbachev requires results in the next few years and a series of dangers threaten to confound his purposes. The political and administrative obstacles to *perestroika* in the economic sphere are considerable, and the potential opposition here is neither entirely predictable nor by any means defeated. Any future uprising in Eastern Europe would create acute dilemmas for Soviet strategy—to intervene or not—and could stop the programme in its tracks. Similarly a crisis in the Third World in which the USSR was forced into a humiliating defeat would have much the same implications. Finally, sustained Western resistance to arms control could progressively weaken his position, and it is still far from obvious that the American and Soviet motivations behind the INF deal are in any sense commensurate. More generally, it seems impossible to say yet whether the Western governments have made up their minds about the extent to which a reformed Soviet Union is in their interests.

Over the longer term, and beyond whatever the exigencies of a lame-duck Presidency and a US election dictate (summits, INF etc.), the underlying goals of American strategy, notably a global confrontation with the Soviet Union and a desire to achieve internal change in the East, remain unaltered. In addition, the roots of the domestic rightward shift which put Reaganism in power persist, and current 'neo-liberal'

³⁷ P. Halliday, 'Beyond Irangate: The Reagan Doctrine and the Third World', *Transnational Institute* 1987

Democratic opposition is premised on an acceptance rather than a reversal of many of the tenets of Reaganism.³⁸

Taking the arms race first, despite the excitement surrounding INF, there is little indication that either side is relaxing its commitment to military competition in high technology conventional weapons, strategic nuclear weapons or space research.³⁹ While the INF deal inevitably lowered the *public profile* of the military competition between the super-powers, it had almost no perceptible impact on the competition itself. This was hardly surprising. Since the linkage between the weapon systems involved was a purely *ex post facto* political one, their linked removal (especially given the advent of SLCM deployment) could hardly be of great military significance. With respect to the nuclear arms race, the INF Agreement, though unprecedented on many counts, was a twist but not a turn. Moreover the European deployment of INF had been only one of several military components in the attempted displacement of the strategy of containment (with its doctrine of MAD) by the policy of 'global confrontation' (and the associated doctrines of counterforce and horizontal escalation).

The other components included the deployment of high-accuracy counterforce nuclear missiles (principally MX and Trident D₅); the development of an effective ABM and ASAT capability; the 'Rogers Plan' (1983), involving the application of emerging technologies to conventional forces together with the related FOFA and ALB doctrines;⁴⁰ the adoption of a forward pre-emptive nuclear Maritime Strategy; and of course the huge build-up of conventional forces (routinely equipped with battlefield nuclear systems) for purposes of Third World intervention. None of these is directly affected by the INF Agreement (though some will come under budgetary pressures), and several (notably ASAT, ABM, conventional modernization and counterforce) are paralleled by equivalent (though for the most part less advanced) Soviet programmes. And of course, despite Reagan's post-Summit claims, SDI remains an enormous obstacle to any further accord.⁴¹ Far from being reversed, the arms race is on the verge of a qualitatively new phase, as both arsenals re-equip with first-strike weapons (easily accommodated within lower warhead totals) and the technological competition is transposed into the field of ABM and space-based systems.

The thaw in superpower diplomatic relations has also failed, thus far, to blunt the (indirect) military confrontation in the Third World. Though regional conflicts were high on the Washington Summit agenda, leading especially to high media expectations of a deal on Afghanistan,

38 M. Davis, 'From Fordism to Reaganism: The Crisis of American Hegemony in the 1980s', in R. Bush et al. eds., *The World Order: Socialist Perspectives*, Cambridge 1987.

39 For a detailed survey see C. Jacobson ed., *The Uncertain Course*, Oxford 1987.

40 The former envisages deep strikes into the western Soviet Union during the early stages of a conventional war in Europe.

41 'President Reagan's national security adviser, Lt Gen Colin Powell, has admitted to Congress that [during the Washington Summit] the Soviets had reserved the right to abandon a planned strategic arms reduction accord if the US tested the SDI 'Star Wars' components in space. Indeed, they retained the option to increase their offensive long-range arsenals.' 'Reagan Aide Admits SDI Divisions With Moscow', *Financial Times*, 31.12.87.

it is far from clear that future developments in that country will lead to a peaceful and stable outcome. Elsewhere, the war in Angola continued with South African claims of clashes involving Soviet personnel; and no ground was given (publicly at any rate) on Nicaragua, despite the Arias Plan and an apparently growing Soviet desire to tone down its support for the Sandinistas.

As for Europe the loosening of the ties of Atlanticism seem likely to reveal not an independent, social democratic, nuclear-free Europe but a nuclear, capitalist West Europe.⁴² Ominous moves that may yet develop in this direction are already taking shape as the EC widens its net to draw in the EFTA partners, creates a unified internal market behind external protectionist barriers, and simultaneously enlarges its brief to include the co-ordination of foreign policy. There has also been both a growing symmetry between the EC and European NATO and an emerging crisis of alignment among the European neutrals.⁴³ The revival of the EDC in the form of the West European Union (WEU) is of crucial significance here: it could link the EC to NATO as a second pillar of the Alliance or it could presage the transformation of West Europe into a capitalist bloc with its own distinct security and foreign policy.

The precise future alignments of Britain, France and West Germany are as yet unclear as they search for viable post-Atlanticist alternatives. Strains within the NATO alliance in particular, and in the West more generally, are aggravated by American attempts to reassert its global ambitions in the face of the possible emergence of competitive regional trading blocs (or at least strongly divergent interests over international trade and monetary policy) centred around West Europe and Japan. Whether the future promises an incipient regionalization of the world economy and the decline of US hegemony, or merely a shift of the locus of that hegemony from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the consequences for European Atlanticism are profoundly unsettling. Moreover, given the political conflicts associated with the decline and/or realignment of US hegemony, co-operative solutions to economic instability are increasingly hard to find.

This has important implications for Western unity. For the US, three major factors among others will increasingly govern the direction of its European policy. In the first place, the dominant economic pull for the American economy is now the Pacific Basin which is both the fastest growing area of the world economy and by far the most serious challenge to US competitiveness. Thus the economic rationale of their military commitment to Europe is being eroded, and the attractions of stimulating a Japanese defence build-up are correspondingly increased: the economic benefits of channelling the Japanese trade surplus into domestic military spending reinforce the longer-term logic of the strategic shift (a shift that would be reinforced by any Sino-Soviet rapprochement). At the same time, the combination of political problems of

⁴² Our thinking on the following was given a clearer focus by John Palmer's contributions to the above mentioned END Seminar.

⁴³ F. Halliday, 'The Strange Case of Europe's Neutrals', in *END Journal*, February-March 1988.

bloc management and worsening budgetary constraints dictate the advantages of a rationalization of the US military competition with the USSR at the strategic level—through SDI, etc.—while cutting costs elsewhere. This could involve the removal of land-based intermediate nuclear weapons and considerable numbers of American personnel from West Europe. And finally, the American desire to reassert strategic superiority combined with the build-up of conventional forces, rapid deployment capacities, basing in Third World states, etc. reflects the aim of regaining a credible capacity to intervene, and deter, in the Third World.⁴⁴ In this context the US will encourage the (often willing) European powers to build up conventional forces in order to play a subordinate role in American-led intervention throughout the Third World—this is one of the meanings of recent events in the Gulf.

Europe's New Role in America's World

The early 1980s witnessed a war of succession in the American foreign policy and strategic establishment.⁴⁵ On the one hand, there were those advocating 'no first use', elimination of the escalation spectrum, increased conventional defences and a reduced level of strategic deterrence. On the other, there were the 'nuclear use theorists' (NUTS), who saw warfighting strategies as a way of transforming the escalation ladders of flexible response into an offensive posture of 'extended deterrence'. The temporary resolution of this debate in favour of the latter began with Carter's Presidential Directive 59, issued in summer 1980, which endorsed a countervailing strategy; and this fitted in with the counterforce nature of pre-existing targeting.⁴⁶ At a doctrinal level this shift was the outcome of the identification of two flaws in the existing strategy of flexible response: there could be no guarantee that competitive escalation could be concluded on terms favourable to the US, and the strategy therefore did not include a persuasive vision of how the application of force could promote the attainment of *political* objectives.

This renewed desire to be able to project American military power to further political and economic goals had new implications for 'Europe's role in America's world'. American strategies were well aware that 'the Eastern market might provide an alternative to the kind of strong military-industrial complex that props up (and orients) American technology. Put the other way round, Germany's only alternative to the Eastern trade might be to develop a strong military-industrial complex of its own.'⁴⁷ In this context the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles can be seen as helping to couple Europe politically and economically to America's Third World and global confrontation strategies. Their strictly military role could soon be taken over by sea-based missiles: but 'politically, they help to "couple" Europe to American's

⁴⁴ See F. Hallday, 'Cold War, The Peace Movement and The Third World', in P. Worsley and K. Hadjor eds., *On the Brink*, London 1987.

⁴⁵ The following account draws heavily on Johnstone, *Politics of Eurostrategies*.

⁴⁶ Cf. D. Mackenzie, 'Nuclear War Planning and Strategies of Coercion', *NLR* 148, November–December 1984.

⁴⁷ Johnstone, p. 189.

global strategy, while at the same time psychologically "de-coupling" Europe from American's "strategic umbrella" *in the way sought by American leaders.*⁴⁸

Behind this shift lay the potential West European opening to the East that detente made possible, and to the Third World in the vacuum that followed the collapse of the Nixon Doctrine in Iran. The European allies would now have to be roped into a renewed imperialist offensive to counter the expansion of East-West trade and the assertion of Third World power. In particular, with the exhaustion of the oil-profit recycling strategy of the '70s, any potential of West Europe to pursue an independent detente and/or bilateral and preferential deals with the Third World (especially the OPEC states) had to be averted. Thus, in sum, the American Right's strategy for Europe involved the stimulation of a new Gaullism. 'The first security initiative taken within the framework of the WEU was the decision by Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands to send minesweepers to the Gulf, and by West Germany to transfer ships from the North Sea to the Mediterranean.'⁴⁹

In this scenario an INF deal may signify nothing more than the successful culmination of the reorientation of American strategic focus away from Europe, detente and containment, and towards global confrontation, a rationalized strategic nuclear competition, and increased Third World intervention and policing. What we do not see is any indication that the INF Agreement, by loosening the bonds of superpower domination, is promoting the emergence of either a non-aligned or a denuclearized Europe.

Where this interpretation contrasts most directly with the current thinking of END is in its recognition that the policies of the state, even when resulting in acts of partial disarmament, never cease to be part of an evolving state strategy for managing political shifts and pressures—whether the latter are generated domestically or in the international system. This is certainly not to say that pressure cannot be brought successfully to bear on state policy; but it does expose the vulnerability to outflanking tactics of a movement whose political perspective leans towards a unilinear model of exterminist accumulation. Specifically, while the peace movement naturally attempts to read in the current pass the signs of its own success or failure in breaking the grip of exterminism, the reality may be that neither reading captures the nature of the new challenge which it faces.

V. After Exterminism

None of these developments, of course, is news to END. The *Journal* has for many months been peppered with explicit references to this possibility of an emergent West European bloc, and there have been few illusions concerning the motivations of the superpowers or the European allies in the recent INF negotiations—despite the occasional wild suggestion that Gorbachev's international programme is premised

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 190–91.

⁴⁹ 'A Project for the 1990s', *END Journal*, Dec/Jan 87/8

on an acceptance of the peace movement's argument, and that the thaw in superpower relations is the effect of peace movement pressure.⁵⁰ But what is also evident is that this awareness has not yet formed a part of END's assessment of the peace movement's role in the current conjuncture: the terms in which END has interpreted the events of 1986-88 indicate how far it continues to define itself as part of a consciously anti-extremist movement which, having witnessed a partial realization of its goals, anticipates their fuller achievement through the unstinting pursuit of its existing strategy.⁵¹

To date, this interpretation has focused on three sets of related issues: the implications of *perestroika*, changes in military strategy in East and West, and the role of social movements in a beyond-the-blocs politics. So far as the first of these is concerned, the *perestroika* of the Gorbachev era is seen as providing 'permission' for a limited development of opposition in the East, and this can be used by social movements to advance the cause of an independent civil society in those countries. *Perestroika* also has implications for the relations between the USSR and Eastern Europe. The Soviet attitude is, however, recognized as deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, greater national autonomy for the East European countries is being discussed, and the traditional insistence on the Soviet model of socialism as the exclusive source of socialist orthodoxy is being revised. On the other hand, as in previous phases of liberalization, the limits of Soviet tolerance for East European experimentation are not indicated in advance.

Secondly, it is argued that (together with the momentum of Gorbachev's arms proposals) the new concept of 'reasonable sufficiency' in Soviet military thinking, which breaks with the escalatory notion of nuclear deterrence and the fetish of 'balance', has severely compromised the idea of 'flexible response' as a rationale for the West's military posture. The resultant disarray within NATO opens the possibility that related ideas of non-provocative conventional defence can be put onto the West's agenda too. The assumption here is presumably that the partial military dislocation of the Atlanticist bloc (through the 'crisis of flexible response') entails some undermining of the supports of European militarism itself. More generally, the Soviet 'peace offensive' and the signs of openness in the East compromise the degree to which western politicians can deploy the 'Soviet threat' for the purposes of bloc and domestic political management.

Thirdly, and finally, END has redoubled its emphasis on the evolving

50 'It was public pressure, exerted through the democratic process, that brought about a renewed US interest in détente' 'Nice Smiles', M. Kaldor, *END Journal* Editorial, Dec/Jan 85/6. 'Gorbachev did accept the zero option. And as he has made clear in many speeches, he did so because he had accepted the peace movement argument.' 'A Project for the 1990s', M. Kaldor, *END Journal* Editorial, Dec/Jan 87/8

51 'To reduce fears, remove enemy images, and to increase trust, must involve a coming together of East and West—co-operation in all shares of activity. This is the new [sic] peace movement project, now that our first project is successfully completed. It is more complex and sophisticated than our earlier opposition to the Euro-missiles, and it requires a different kind of movement—and a different set of alliances, with a mix of social movements in Eastern Europe as well as the third world.' M. Kaldor, 'A Project for the 1990s'

role of citizens' action from below in challenging the blocs. Here both the interdependence of autonomous opposition movements in East and West and the transformative potential of citizens' 'anti-political' organizations in the East continue to be stressed. Taking the first of these, breaking the inverted cold war bonding on both sides has involved a difficult but vital collaborative process. In the early years, END visitors found considerable Eastern resistance to the exclusive priority given by Western peace movements to the nuclear threat: the Eastern Europeans' dominant experience of the blocs was the routine denial of their civil, political and national rights; and NATO's nuclear weapons were frequently seen as a vital restraint on harsher Soviet repression.⁵² It was thus only through END's incorporation of this Eastern European perspective (in the subsequent affirmation of the 'indivisibility of peace'⁵³) that the movements could create for each other the political and ideological space for genuinely independent opposition on both sides to the same bloc system. The success of this policy is held to be illustrated by the emergence of the Polish group 'Freedom and Peace' (WiP). For although this still comprises a range of divergent positions on Western nuclear arsenals, the significance of the hard-won phrase 'Freedom and Peace' shows how much progress has been made—particularly in fiercely nationalistic Poland.⁵⁴ The conditions of this possibility should however be noted in their significance for peace-movement politics: they underline the overwhelming priority of solidarity with the 'independents' in the East, and entail that where tactical decisions have to be made by END over responses to reforming officialdom, the needs of the independents should never be compromised.

This insistence on an indissoluble link between peace and human rights derives partly from the practical exigencies mentioned above. But it rests also on the crucial agency accorded in the Exterminist analysis to the growth of non-aligned social movements on both sides. It is because such growth is seen as the only way to secure genuine peaceful coexistence that some in END believe that absolute priority must be given to fostering relations with oppositional groups in the East, even if this means refusing dialogue with ruling parties and official peace organizations.

While no new (post-INF) common focus of anti-Cold War mobilization has emerged (bar struggles for the right of conscientious objection), the connected theme of 'anti-politics' shows signs of cohering (in END thinking) around issues more commonly associated with the Green movement. Thus, particularly since Chernobyl, the growth of citizens' ecological groups in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR—as well as in the Soviet Union—has evoked special interest.⁵⁵ There is hope in some quarters that apparent proliferation of such activities in

⁵² For Thompson's account of this and related dilemmas see 'Acting As Free Persons', in DE

⁵³ The 'indivisibility of peace' the principled refusal on both sides to accept any separation, practical or ideological, of the issues of disarmament and human rights

⁵⁴ See, for example, R. Bloom, 'Provoking Peace in Poland', in *END Journal* 28 9 87, p 5.

⁵⁵ See the END Briefing Sheet 'Ecology in Eastern Europe', and a forthcoming volume of contributions on Chernobyl and the new Eastern ecological movements

the relaxed atmosphere of *glasnost* might soon provide the basis for a campaign across nation-states and across the blocs—which could reproduce the common mobilizing focus of the Cruise/SS-20 issue. Although this perspective is entirely consonant with Thompson's call to refuse the common, 'human ecological threat', it does of course lie at some remove from a direct engagement with the issues of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, such groups as VIP, Charter 77, the Danube Circle etc. are seen to presage the determined expansion of civil society as an 'anti-political' challenge to the existing official structures of power whose policies sustain the bloc confrontation.

Ambiguities and Contradictions

The steadily mounting contradictions between the linked Exterminist categories of human rights/Europe/denuclearization have gone virtually unregarded. Most obviously, the events of the last year or so seem to contradict directly the fundamental assumptions (a) that moves towards the relaxation of Cold War tensions could not come from either of the aggravated poles of the exterminist structure—or at any rate that Mutually Aggravated Destruction and a reunified Europe were the only possible outcomes of the crisis over Cruise; and (b) that Cold War tensions in Europe were reducible to superpower occupation. Moreover the *appointed* agent of the de-escalation, the mobilization of a radical democratic 'detente from below', cannot be seen as the cause of these developments; and the insertion of such a strategy into the reforming atmosphere of *perestroika* is far from unproblematic. Nevertheless, as we have seen, END continues to interpret the significance of the international process in terms of an incipient dissolution of the blocs as envisaged in the original analysis—*perestroika* as 'permission', and INF as 'crisis of flexible response'. And the unnoticed collapse of the ideological conditions of an internationalist anti-bloc peace movement strategy increasingly deflects these abiding emphases of END into a trajectory which, paradoxically, may carry it, oblivious, into the backwaters of the very systemic conflict it has sought to transcend.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the moment of Exterminism for the present argument is the way it was able to accommodate an ambiguity which subsequent events have rendered problematic. Theoretically, there seemed to be no need to offer an account of state policy as distinct from the monolithic exterminism of the blocs (because of the multinational NATO deployment)—though of course these have never been fully assimilable; and practically, opposition to the weapons-systems was married both to an assertion of popular democratic rights and a (patriotic) rejection of the international hegemony of the blocs—though in fact the recovery or reassertion of an independent civil society has no obvious consequences for the foreign and military policies of the state. But once the European countries have disclosed their own indigenous *nuclearphilia*, the anti-bloc ideology (taken on its own) loses any *necessary* connection with either the nuclear arms race or the Cold War. In any case the peace movement never did constitute itself as an independent organization which could serve as a prototype for such an autonomous civil society. Opposition to Cruise and Pershing could be seen as a transitional demand which connected an attempt to influence

the direction of state policy with a challenge that sought to transform the structures of exterminism—and which thereby united the range of oppositional interests concerned.

What is new, then, in the current pass is, first, that state strategies have visibly diverged from the course charted for them by the Exterminist analysis, and this has confounded END's geopolitical aspirations for the peace movement, so that the former's original analysis is increasingly tangential to the debates over the direction of state policy. And, second, in the absence of the transitional demands on the state which allowed those aspirations, END is left with only one pole of the ambiguity—the democratic transformation of exterminist structures through citizens' detente. The danger is that this struggle for human and political rights in civil society in the East is nevertheless assumed still to have direct implications for the progress of East–West disarmament and the construction of a reunified, denuclearized Europe—even after the conditions which made it a plausible 'beyond-the-blocs' strategy have passed. While the resultant concentration on East–West intra-peace movement relations is a logical focus for END, its consciously anti-exterminist perspective may progressively (as the geopolitical cogency of Exterminism recedes with the conjuncture of Cruise deployment) define its disengagement from the tasks of mobilizing pressure against strategies of the British state—except in the form of increasingly improbable demands for policies of *Ostpolitik*, non-alignment etc.

If the newly restricted purview of the END analysis tends to exclude a consciously articulated engagement with changing state strategies, there are on the other hand a range of activist perspectives, previously regulated by the overriding geopolitical objectives of the movement, which are now coming to the fore in a way which would confirm that exclusion. Specifically, with the divergence of popular democratic and (directive) national projects, currents of anarchist thinking and strategy have found a new prominence. The conceptual exclusion zone around the idea of the state—which reflected (and in Thompson's thinking still does reflect⁵⁶) the confluence of political and geographical aspirations—has been breached; an anarchist concern with the construction of a (stateless) civil society is elevated as a self-evident value, and is explicitly opposed to strategies which seek to mobilize the agency of the state. Thus Lynne Jones has argued from this perspective: 'The main division is not between East and West but between those who see the established power structures as part of the problem (and therefore wish to challenge them) and those who see them as part of the solution and wish to support them. . . . We can no longer rely on an alliance with socialist or social democratic parties to achieve our goals, if only because they seem to have become politically redundant. We have to create an effective political opposition with or without them. Increased activism in Eastern Europe and the opening up of the Soviet Union mean that the possibilities for a joint East–West agenda are much greater today than at any time in recent years. New situations need new institutions. . . . what is now required is precisely a "league of opposi-

⁵⁶ For the sustained consistency of Thompson's dual/confused focus see DE, pp.151–52.

tions".⁵⁷ In a less pronounced form, similar assumptions suffuse the growing preoccupation with an East-West alliance of ecological and anti-nuclear movements; in both cases the ostensible issues are seen as the means of generating and focusing demands for an expanded civil society in the East and popular protest in the West which will challenge existing state structures.

Quite apart from the forms of political mobilization which this perspective devalues, its premises are, we would suggest, fundamentally misconstrued. The implied outright dismissal of any engagement with state strategies involves straining the obvious truism that the exercise of state power depends upon the co-operation of the population, into the fallacy that the refusal of co-operation by the population actually forms the basis of an alternative (stateless) social order.⁵⁸ For in fact state power is not reducible either to the contractual abrogation of individual rights and powers or (as in Marxist formulations) to the superstructural complement of class power at the base. No recovery of individual rights or reappropriation of the means of production dissolves the state's monopoly over the means of violence which underpins its generic power. Moreover, this power of the state is directly and *continuously* imbricated with the constitution of civil society, and the relation between the two is a dialectical one in which neither can be finally cancelled. The interests served by state power, the form in which it is deployed, the means by which it is held accountable, and the policies which it pursues are all subject to modification in this 'dialectic of control'; but to perceive the state itself as something to be either opposed or supported is actually to deny the possibility of a transformative politics that seeks to modify this dialectic in a progressive direction. What is more, since the central front in *this* campaign is *bound* to be the dissident struggle for political rights in Eastern Europe, the disenchantment (resulting from the decline of the movement's parliamentary influence in the West) with any party political process has the effect, willy-nilly, of recasting its anti-cold-war ideology in the classic posture of cold war—and precisely at a time of unprecedented and precarious political reform in the East. This degeneration is reflected simultaneously in other European peace groups which have stressed the Exterminist 'detente from below',⁵⁹ and was cause of considerable friction at the 1987 END Convention in Coventry. The irony is that this trend, if sustained, would place END's strategy in direct contrast with the original anti-exterminist vision, which struggled to recover in the ambiguities and possibilities of a determinate historical conjuncture precisely the form of a transformative politics long repressed by the Cold War.

We should clarify the significance of this point a little further with

57 L. Jones, 'Time for a Change', *END Journal* 28.9.87, pp.20 and 23. Lyn Jones is the current (1988) Chair of END.

58 The position outlined below draws directly on the arguments developed by A. Giddens in *The Nation-State and Violence*, Cambridge 1985.

59 Cf. 'Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Accords', (European Network for East-West Dialogue, Berlin 1987) and 'After INF What Next?' (Statement of 22-25 October Meeting of the International Peace Communication and Co-ordination Centre, The Hague) reprinted in *END Journal*, Dec/Jan 87/8. For Europe, the implementation of the Helsinki Agreements in their entirety must be a priority. The peace movements in Europe have pledged to work to this end.

respect to what is left of END's domestic political strategy. Western European and British politics, though still covered quite ably in the *Journal*, seem to figure less and less in internal discussions of the goals of the organization. This waning star finally came to earth with something of a bump at the 1987 CND Convention where, under the pressure of the INF deal, the major debates resounded to calls for an alternative British foreign policy: this circumstance highlighted the unlooked-for paradox that while END had been advocating such a policy for 7½ years, its long-awaited opportunity to convince the rest of the British peace movement would probably now be missed for the lack of anything concrete to say on the matter. This is not altogether surprising. As noted above, END's 'alternative foreign policy' was relevant only so long as it found a mass resonance in a national campaign making transitional demands on the state, at a time when existing policy was seen as courting the danger of war. Once the perceived danger has passed, and the thundering issues of war and peace have dissolved back into the routine management of geopolitical and economic interests, then arguments for alternatives need to be at once more informed and more realistic. It is not difficult to understand how, in these circumstances, the desire of END for a direct engagement with exterminism should increasingly be concentrated on the immediate confrontations offered by the 'detente from below'. As the Editor of the *END Journal* expressed it, musing on the 1986 END Convention, held in a Paris suburb: 'The almost complete lack of interest in the Convention shown by the French media added to the sense of being nowhere in particular. . . . I felt that we might have been better off holding an underground meeting in Eastern Europe: there at least we would have provided a focus for the secret police and the Convention would have become something of a talking point on the underground political grapevine.'⁶⁰

Conclusions

The remarkable exponential growth and vigorous campaigning of the West European peace movements during the Second Cold War made a real impact on the political life of the West which must be recognized in both its incisiveness and its diversity. Not only did they mobilize, unify and articulate what was undoubtedly the most significant groundswell of popular opposition to cold war policies and ideology; they also used this to raise the generic issue of the nuclear threat (together with the related issues of state militarism and the conduct of international relations) to the level of a burning question in the national politics of the day. And while the goals of the campaign focused on government policy (specifically, the reversal of INF deployment decisions) the sheer institutional and disciplinary range of its extra-parliamentary articulation is worth celebrating. The demands of the peace movement affected the internal politics of local authorities, trade unions, the churches, the education system, the medical and academic establishments, the women's and ecological movements, multiplying the terrains of ideological struggle and augmenting month by month the variety of distinctive anti-nuclear affirmations. The nuclear-free zones, the attempt to promote 'peace studies' in the schools, the sweeping proposals for arms industry

⁶⁰ M. Kaldor, 'Movements Meet in France', *END Journal*, Summer 1986.

conversion in the unions, not to mention the high tide of unilateralism in the constituency Labour party, will not disappear overnight. Less visibly, the political consequences of the mobilization will continue to evolve (as did those of the first CND and VSC upheavals of the 50s and 60s) in the many activist trajectories which originated in a peace movement radicalization: for of course the membership of the movement was dominated numerically by a new generation.

Nor would it be true to say that the upsurge did not translate into any political effect. Governments wobbled in Holland and Denmark; and there is no telling exactly how far the anti-nuclear radicalizing of Social Democracy across Northern Europe and of Eurocommunism in the South, by promoting US establishment fears that NATO was in danger of becoming an increasingly and exclusively right-wing nuclear club, may have stayed the Administration's hand from further acts of military and political provocation.⁶¹ But perhaps the single most widely recognized effect of peace movement pressure, the Zero Option proposal of November 1981, is also the most representative in its ambiguity.

Some aspects of this ambiguity have been indicated above, but it is worth recapitulating briefly the sequence of political meanings through which the Zero Option has been successively transposed on its journey from the streets of Europe to the Treaty-signing room of the White House. It began as the central demand of the European peace movement, a symbol of the latter's non-alignment and an anticipation of how the reciprocal arms race could be interrupted in a reassertion of European popular sovereignty. It was next taken up by the Reagan Administration at Geneva, and thereby became also the propaganda legitimization for the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II. These competing meanings battled it out fruitlessly over the next 4-5 years while the progressive deployment of INF on both sides and the advent of a new Soviet leadership no longer bound by the negotiating position of its predecessors transformed again both the numerical and the political equation which the Zero Option entailed.⁶² Finally, the Zero Option became simultaneously the vehicle of a new Soviet drive for detente with the West, an additional spur to a possible semi-independent West European military build-up, and (perhaps) the gateway to a longer-term geopolitical reorientation of America's strategic posture.

This is not to say that the INF Agreement has none of the positive consequences hoped for by the peace movement. For it does of course confirm how far the diplomatic strategies of both sides have moved from a direct interest in Cold War hostilities. And insofar as it has been officially proclaimed as the first ever measure of multilateral disarmament, it will support the ideological momentum of the prospective new detente. The unprecedentedly detailed provisions for verification will also presumably assist the case for further agreements. But

61 On the eve of deployment, in November 1983, parliamentary resolutions calling for postponement were mounted by the major opposition parties in W Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg and Italy. *Strategic Survey* chronology

62 The final tally agreed at Washington (1,752 Soviet warheads to 859 American ones) was a far cry from the 1,100 to 0 proposed at Geneva under the same name in 1981.

the fact that the superpowers have taken up the vocabulary of the peace movement, and have recognized the political value of playing to the concerns it articulated, in the pursuit of their respective international goals, emphatically does *not* mean that they have adopted, or are being forced to implement, the peace movement's agenda. In this sense, the overriding aspiration of the peace movement to a 'head-on' engagement with the arms race inevitably went unrealized; and if we ask again 'what would have to be the case for such an aspiration to be politically credible', then the major reasons for this failure are apparent enough.

We have argued that the current predicament of END and its involuntary distortions of the Exterminist vision result largely from the pressures of a growing contradiction between an ideologically necessary and superficially plausible account of the world of the early 80s, and the less assimilable international scene of today. These pressures are at work elsewhere too, in the faltering of CND and the multiplying fractures in the cohesion of the West European movement as a whole.⁶³ Thus the peace movement was not simply outmanoeuvred. It would, we suggest, be wrong to speak as if some alternative analysis—hence strategy—would have served it better. Such a suggestion ignores the deep interdependence between the utopian aspiration and the distinctive ideology of the mobilization: the historical agency of the peace movement, its ambitions predicated upon an analysis extrapolated from a core of moral concerns, has perforce been a staggered one. And given the reality of the processes it challenged, and the nature of the political currents it mobilized, this effect would almost certainly have been even more pronounced had the campaign reached closer to its goals.⁶⁴

As a result, the peace movement now finds itself faced with the kind of political choices for which Exterminism could not have prepared it—choices which force it precisely to go beyond the indivisibility of peace which has been so central to its ideology. The most crucial of these obviously concerns the appropriate responses to Gorbachev's disarmament proposals. Assembled in Coventry at the 1987 END Convention,⁶⁵ the movement as a whole exhibited a real confusion as to whether the *perestroika* is an irresistible invitation to push home radical demands on behalf of Eastern independents, or a growing political space within the structures of communist power for constructive dialogue with the Western Left which it must be the distinctive task of the peace movement to promote. Thus on the one hand, Mient Jan Faber (of the Dutch IKV) suggested at Coventry that following the disarray in NATO over INF, the next goal of the peace movement must be to destabilize the Warsaw

63 There is also another set of dynamics present here. For as the nuclear threat slipped the bonds of the peace movement's ideological characterisation of it—as the moment of Exterminism passed—it also put into sharp relief the political provenance of the various peace movement perspectives. And if CND has tended historically to take a more pro-Soviet line during periods of demobilisation—as the desire of tenacious communist elements for open support of progressive Soviet proposals meets less resistance among the thinning ranks—END's fundamental(ist) insistence on non-alignment and the indivisibility of peace may lead instead to a bizarre self-discovery in a politics of liberal anarchism and a Europeanist proto-nationalism which consequently has no home.

64 A point explicated with forceful clarity by Raymond Williams in 1980, see 'The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament', NLR 124, Nov-Dec 1980, reprinted in *Exterminism and Cold War*.

65 See Luciana Castellina, 'The Peace Movement at Coventry', NLR 161, Sept-Oct 1987.

Treaty Organization. This position has since been echoed within END in the claim that Soviet troop reductions in Eastern Europe should be called for as evidence of the seriousness of the 'new thinking'.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the controversial presence at Coventry of the East European Peace Committees was partly a result of the insistence by the German SPD that a space be found for a 'detente from above'.

Dialogue with reforming officialdom was neither something that was conceivable in the state of heightened Cold War immobilism and repression, nor something that was envisioned in the Exterminist analysis: precisely its absence determined the strategy of the movement. But an alternative analysis of the Soviet system, and one strongly urged on the Western peace movement by Roy Medvedev, has always maintained that the best hope for social change can only come from reformist currents within the Party, supported by a socialist opposition—of the kind now possibly represented by the Soviet Federation of Socialist Clubs. In this latter perspective the role of the Western peace movement is not defined in terms of the testing of the limits of *glasnost*. It consists rather in helping to sustain *in the West* one vital condition for the success of those reforms, namely a genuine detente.

⁶⁶ The dilemmas of this position have been well expressed by Fred Halliday: '... new opportunities for offensive linkage are opening up for the West once the question of Soviet troop withdrawals from Eastern Europe is posed as part of the conventional arms negotiations, then the very stability of the Warsaw Pact States is put in question. A Soviet Union without an alliance system would not be one in which the self-confidence of *perestroika* could best flourish.' Fred Halliday, 'The Struggle to Reform', TLS Feb 5-11, 1988. See also K. Conze, *Listening for Peace*, p.9

Subordination and Struggle: Women in Bangladesh

Bangladesh belongs to what has been described as a belt of 'classic patriarchy'¹ which stretches from northern Africa across the Middle East to the northern plains of the Indian sub-continent.* The social structures in this belt are characterized by their institutionalization of extremely restrictive codes of behaviour for women. They stand in marked contrast to the societies of south India and much of Southeast Asia whose institutions and practices permit a more egalitarian system of gender relations.² In as much as both Muslim and non-Muslim societies are encompassed within this belt, Islam is only partially implicated in their extreme forms of female subordination. What the societies have in common are the practice of rigid gender segregation, specific forms of family and kinship and a powerful ideology linking family honour to female virtue. Men are entrusted with safeguarding family honour through their control over female members; they are backed by complex social arrangements which ensure the protection—and dependence—of women.

While the dominant ideology governing relations between women and men in Bangladesh is Islam, it is not the same version that prevails in West Asia or even in Pakistan of which it was once part. As a social force, Islam is tempered or reinforced by the cultural context into which it is introduced. Bangladesh's location has made it resistant to the 'divine, theocratic, centralist and establishment-based' version of Islam, linked to Arabic learning and oriented to the Middle East, practised for instance in Pakistan.³ In terms of its cultural location, it lies on the far eastern frontier of classic patriarchy, at its point of transition to the more 'feminine' cultures of Burma and the rest of Southeast Asia. Indeed, there is some evidence that the original cultivators of the Bengal delta came from Southeast Asia and introduced their own belief systems into the region. The country's geographical location on the periphery of the Indian subcontinent, its complex network of rivers and massive annual flooding, meant that it remained isolated for several centuries from north Indian peasant culture. The great religions of India—Brahminical Hinduism, with its caste stratification, and Islam—reached Bengal later than the rest of northern India. Each was imposed in turn on a pre-existing folk culture whose beliefs and customs can still be detected beneath the edifices constructed by formal religions. Beliefs about the land and the seasons, about pollution, sexuality and childbirth, about kinship and fate, about ghosts, demons and holy men are shared by Muslim and Hindu peasant alike and are essentially Bengali beliefs, the 'little tradition'. In addition, other aspects of culture—songs, art, literature, cinema, language, apparel, and diet—also transcend political and religious boundaries with Hindu West Bengal.

As a result, there are ingrained tensions between what is considered Bengali about the Bangladeshi identity and what is considered Islamic. Many aspects of the indigenous culture were regarded as products of Hindu influence by Pakistan's ruling Muslim fraternity and underlay its deep fear and resistance to the prospect of Bengali rule in 1971. Despite the efforts of the country's military regime, tensions in the national identity continue to impede mobilization of popular grassroots support for the kind of Islamic fundamentalism that characterizes state policy towards women in Pakistan today. In any attempt to analyse women's subordination in Bangladesh, therefore, it is not sufficient to point to the ideology and practices of Islam. The fact that many of the structures

¹ The phrase is taken from Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', in *Gender and Society* (forthcoming, September, 1988).

* This article has drawn heavily on conversations, arguments and encounters with women who are active in various capacities in the women's movement in Bangladesh. I would like to thank in particular Rokeya Rahman Kaber, from Sapthagram Nari Svanirwar Parishad, Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, Rubi Ghossein and Shireen Haq of Narpokkho. My thanks also to Meghna Gubathakurtha of Nari Shongiti and Maleka Begum of Mahila Parishad. Obviously, they will not all agree with my interpretation of women's struggles in Bangladesh, but by their example, their ideas and their commitment they have all contributed in different ways to the analysis contained in this article.

² For a summary of the main elements that comprise these contrasting models of kinship and gender relations within the context of the Indian sub-continent, see Tim Dyson and Mick Moore, 'On Kinship Structure, Female Autonomy and Demographic Behaviour', in *Population and Development Review*, 9 (1) p. 35-60.

³ B. K. Jahangir, *Problematics of Nationalism in Bangladesh*, Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka University, 1986, p. 79.

of subordination pre-date Islam and are shared with Hindu northern India suggest that these latter must also be brought into the analysis.

The following account of the situation of women in Bangladesh is divided into three parts. The introductory section provides a historical background, touching briefly on the social implications of the development processes instituted in the country at different stages of its recent history. The second section analyses the structures of women's oppression in Bangladesh. The final section examines attempts that have been and are being made to transform the situation of Bangladeshi women.

I. Historical Background

The Pakistan Era

In 1947, two hundred years of British rule in the Indian subcontinent came to an end when India was granted independence. At the same time, a homeland was created for the Muslims of India by carving a new nation out of the eastern (East Bengal) and north-western (Sind, Baluchistan, Northwest Frontier Province and West Punjab) extremities of the country. They became respectively known as East and West Pakistan. (Throughout this article, Pakistan refers to what was previously known as West Pakistan; Bangladesh or East Bengal refers to what was previously known as East Pakistan.) The rationale for the new state of Pakistan was essentially theological; Islam was the sole principle of nationhood unifying two widely disparate units, separated not only by a thousand miles of hostile Indian territory, but by sharp cultural and linguistic differences.

Twenty-four years after partition, the province of East Bengal became the independent state of Bangladesh. In the intervening period, it had been systematically reduced to the status of a colony by a West Pakistan-based ruling class. Foreign exchange, a vital but scarce resource for developing countries, was earned by the export of East Bengal's agricultural commodities, but used to finance industrial investment in West Pakistan. The eastern province also acted as a protected market for its manufactured goods. The consequent disparity in the development of the two wings sparked off a mass movement for regional autonomy among the Bengali population and led to an overwhelming victory on this platform for the Awami League in the national elections in December, 1970. This was interpreted by the Pakistani ruling class as a threat to the national integrity. A vicious military crackdown ensued in March 1971, culminating nine months later in the establishment of a People's Republic of Bangladesh.

In many ways, the impetus for an independent Bangladesh was a logical byproduct of the 'decade of development' inaugurated under the regime of Ayub Khan and cited as a model of capitalist success by the international planning community. Development policy in the Pakistan era identified economic growth with the creation of an industrial base. To finance this, the government followed a deliberate strategy of fostering economic disparity, by diverting the surplus generated in the

agricultural sector into the hands of a small class of entrepreneurs based in West Pakistan. The rationale for this strategy was summed up in a succinct fashion by one of the US advisers to the Pakistan Planning Commission: 'Great inequalities were necessary in order to create industry and industrialists . . . the concentration of income in industry facilitates the savings which finance development.'⁴

It was the peasantry, the backbone of a predominantly agricultural economy, which had to be squeezed in order to provide investible funds for the industrial sector. The consequences of this strategy were no different from those in other Third World countries that embarked on similar programmes of industrialization: an increase in the rate of economic growth purchased at the price of growing impoverishment and polarization in the countryside. In the case of Pakistan, however, the contradictions were exacerbated by the regional dimension; the transfer of wealth from the peasantry to the rising entrepreneurial class also represented a transfer from East to West Pakistan. While it was recognized that the peasantry were bearing the brunt of the drive to industrialize, the low priority assigned to their interests by development planners was justified by the conventional wisdom of the 'trickle-down theory' of economic growth: 'Inequalities in income contribute to the growth of the economy which makes possible a real improvement for the lower income groups.'⁵

The planners were even more reticent about the benefits of development for women. Women's interests were implicitly subsumed under the interests of the population as a whole and it was assumed that the trickle down of benefits would finally make its way to them. As one US-AID economist acknowledged with the wisdom of hindsight, 'I admit to an early misconception that the female half of the population naturally benefits from overall growth. I now recognize a few of the problems that a male-dominated society causes and the economic advantages to be gained from female participation in achieving developmental objectives.'⁶ In almost all areas of development women were either adversely affected or simply bypassed: agricultural extension work and land reform schemes had little relevance to them because they were seldom permitted to own land and because of their tightly circumscribed role in the agricultural process. The mechanization of rice husking, weaving and fishnet manufacture all encroached on the few areas of work and employment permitted to women within the traditional division of labour.

There was—and still is—one policy area, however, in which women have always appeared in the forefront: population control programmes. Given an economic strategy dominated by the drive to accumulate investment funds, it was inevitable that population growth was seen as an inhibiting factor on the country's ability to generate savings. Less clearly articulated, but equally compelling, were the fears of the national ruling class and its international allies that untrammelled birth rates

⁴ Cited in Richard Nations, *Pakistan. Class and Colony*, NLR 68, pp. 3-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Joseph Stepanek, *Bangladesh. Equitable Growth?* Pergamon Press, New York 1979, p. 51.

would threaten the fragile balance between rulers and ruled and lead to political instability and economic chaos. Since the early 1960s, women have been the target of unceasing campaigns, combining various degrees of persuasion and coercion, to 'motivate' them to adopt family planning measures. Considerations of women's rights, interests or safety have not played a major part in these campaigns. Bangladesh continues to be the dumping ground for various forms of birth control technology—most recently Depo Provera and Norplant—which have been inadequately tested and are often banned in their country of origin. In spite of a highly publicized progressive Drugs Policy aimed at curbing the influence of the multinationals and encouraging domestic production of essential drugs, there has been no attempt so far to ban these controversial methods or to encourage the local development of safer forms of contraception.

The Post-Liberation Era

Since Liberation, a Bangladeshi ruling class, composed of an unstable class alliance of an underdeveloped industrial bourgeoisie, the military and the bureaucracy, has been in power. Shifts in the balance of power within the ruling alliance have generated contradictory pressures on the national development agenda, leading to reversals and conflicts in policy. Despite the shifts, there have been two consistent features throughout this period: increasing social differentiation and impoverishment in both rural and urban sectors and an almost steady rise in dependence on aid.

The post-Liberation government of the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib sought to make food self-sufficiency a national priority and to shift the pre-Liberation emphasis on industry to agriculture and rural development. It embarked on a radical economic programme which included the nationalization of key industries, strict controls over foreign exchange and imports and limits on foreign investment. In political terms, Mujib attempted to create a non-aligned status for Bangladesh by negotiating aid and assistance from diversified sources, including India and the socialist countries. However, the socialist rhetoric and radical measures of the Mujib government attracted the hostility of the US. The disbursement of committed aid from US sources was slowed down to indicate its lack of support. One of the critical factors behind the devastating famine of 1974 was the US decision to withhold food aid shipments (over the question of Bangladesh's trade relations with Cuba) at a time when the country was suffering from floods of catastrophic proportions. The government was driven to request financial help from the World Bank and IMF. The loan was granted, subject to a number of conditions which sought to grant more concessions to the private sector and to open up the country to foreign capital.

After the assassination of Mujib and a short succession of coups, a military regime under Zia-ur Rahman took control and set the country on its present pro-Islamic pro-US course. Dependence on aid continued to rise—aid disbursed as a percentage of GDP rose from 10 per cent in 1972/73 to 14 per cent in 1981/82—but there were significant changes in the sources of aid. Aid from India and the socialist bloc decreased,

but aid from the OPEC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, became much more important. The magnitude of aid donated to Bangladesh has given the international donor community a far-reaching influence over the country's affairs. Both at the national level, through conditions imposed by IMF, and at the local level, through the planning and implementation of development projects, foreign intervention is evident in almost every sphere and at every level—in the economy, in internal and national security and in consumer aspirations. The country has been drawn closer into the IMF–World Bank orbit so that by 1982 most of the earlier nationalist policies were modified or reversed. The developmental emphasis has shifted to export-orientation and the private sector, controls over imports and foreign exchange have been relaxed and Bangladesh has become increasingly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the international economy.

II. Social Relations of Gender in Bangladesh

Family, Kinship and Marriage

Although there is no evidence to suggest that nearly three decades of planned development have significantly improved the position of women in Bangladesh—and a great deal to suggest that it has worsened—one of the achievements of the post-Liberation era has been a growing understanding of the position of women, particularly rural women who constitute the overwhelming majority of the female population. A great deal of this new awareness can be attributed to the efforts of village-based development organizations and to increased research efforts during the International Decade for Women.

While many areas of women's lives still remain uncharted, some of the myths and misinformation surrounding the situation of women are being gradually dispelled. The urban middle class image of rural harmony in the golden Bengali countryside has given way to the realization that it is a violent and brutal society in which those who control the levers of power can command labour, loyalty and lives. Furthermore, the idealized picture of Bengali women as cherished and protected daughters/wives/mothers is being superseded by the growing awareness that women in Bangladesh are subordinated within an intensely hierarchical system of gender relations which denies women access both to social power and to autonomy over their own lives. A number of elements can be identified in this system as the key mechanisms through which social controls over women are maintained and reproduced; they relate to the organization of the family, kinship and marriage, to inheritance patterns, to gender segregation and to the ideologies surrounding these practices.

Descent in Bangladesh is organized along patrilineal lines: descent and property are reckoned through the male's offspring. Consequently, the biological paternity of the child becomes a crucial social issue necessitating surveillance and control over women's sexuality and reproduction at every stage of their lives. The honour of the family is believed to lie in the virtue of its women, and men are charged with the role of guardians and protectors. At the heart of a complex system of social

arrangements to enforce female virtue—pre-marital chastity and post-marital fidelity—is the institution of *pardah* or female seclusion. *Pardah* minimizes women's interaction with men outside the immediate family by dividing the world into sexually segregated spheres and confining women to the private sphere of the home. *Pardah* also contains an ideological dimension. It prescribes appropriate modes of behaviour for women, enjoining them to be modest and submissive so as not to excite the attentions of strange men: 'the female voice should not reach male ears outside the household. She must therefore speak in a low voice.'⁷

Concern with the sexual purity of the bride makes constant vigilance necessary and exerts a powerful pressure to marry daughters off as soon as they approach puberty. Little choice is permitted to women in deciding whom they marry. Marriages are arranged by male guardians, although a network of female relatives and informants may operate informally to ensure a suitable match. A woman can expect to be maintained by her husband as long as she is obedient, faithful and fertile. Children are assumed to belong to the husband's lineage and there are social mechanisms to enforce this right. A basic metaphor of rural life compares female fertility to the passive fertility of the soil, requiring the active agency of the male before she can bear fruit. Legal guardianship of the child always belongs to the father, but mothers are allowed custody during childhood—up to the age of seven for male children and until puberty for female. If divorce takes place, the institution of *iddat* allows for the possibility of pregnancy to be ascertained so that the child can be claimed by its rightful father. *Iddat* is a period of seclusion lasting three menstrual cycles during which the woman cannot remarry.

Patrilineal descent clearly plays an important role in the systemic devaluation of women, by its stress on biological paternity as the basis of assigning children and by making women irrelevant in genealogical reckoning. The social arrangements associated with marriage—the preference for lineage and village exogamy (marrying women outside their lineage and village of birth) and for patrilocal residence (the practice of women living with their husband's kin after marriage)—serve further to undermine women's autonomy. Several implications flow from these practices. In the first place, they mean that a daughter is likely to be regarded as a burden by her own family. She has to be supported during her least productive years and kept under constant surveillance so that she can be handed over to her husband with her chastity intact. Her membership of her father's household is truncated at the very point at which she is entering the productive and reproductive stage of her life. Physical care of the daughter has been compared to 'watering the neighbour's tree; you take all the trouble to nurture the plant, but the fruit goes to someone else.'⁸

A second implication of prevailing marriage practices is that once married, a woman is effectively cut off from the potential support

⁷ Cited in Mahmuda Islam, Social Norms, Institutions and Status of Women, in *The Salvation of Women in Bangladesh*, ed. by Women for Women Research and Study Group, Dhaka 1979, p. 227.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

networks of her own kin and there is little basis for solidarity with the women from her husband's kin. She is sent as a young and inexperienced bride into a stranger's household where her behaviour is viewed with suspicion until she has been successfully integrated into the new household and has learnt to identify with its interests. Her position within the household hierarchy is subordinate to that of her mother-in-law and senior sisters-in-law, and she assumes much of the domestic drudgery. Her status within the family will only improve with the birth of children, specifically sons, because of their importance in perpetuating the lineage. Finally, when her sons marry, she will be able to attain the only position of authority open to most women—that of the mother-in-law.

Purdah and the Sexual Division of Labour

Aside from its implications for women's personal autonomy, the prevailing system of gender relations also defines and limits their economic autonomy and social power. In economic terms, the differentiation between male and female space represented by purdah underwrites a division of labour which confines women's legitimate sphere of activities to the boundaries of the homestead, serving both to obscure the value of the labour which they perform within the household and to restrict their access to mainstream employment opportunities.

The work that women perform within the household has two distinct components: reproduction of the household labour force and the creation of, or addition of value to, household goods. Within the former category are all activities connected with bearing and caring for children—the next generation of family labour—as well as those activities which are necessary for the reproduction of labour power on a daily basis. In addition to the usual domestic tasks of preparing, cooking and serving meals and cleaning the house, women in Bangladesh are also responsible for collecting firewood, cow dung etc. for fuel, carrying water for domestic use from nearby ponds or tube-wells and looking after the kitchen garden, livestock and poultry. Meal preparation, in addition to cooking itself, usually involves grinding all the spices, walking long distances for fuel and water (for women from households that do not own the sources of either), husking paddy to make it into edible rice. The main meal each day may take between two or three hours of preparation.

Women's contribution to the creation of value in market commodities is derived from their participation in agricultural production—the processing and storage of grains and pulses—as well as in household-based small-scale industry. In both activities, however, men specialize in those stages of the activity that are carried out in public space—the fields, roads and market place. Women enter the process when it is carried out within the home. Since purdah restrictions prevent women from attending the market, all sale of household produce has to be mediated by men. This is true even when the entire productive process has been women's responsibility. The absence of women at the point at which the value of their labour power is realized means that their contribution remains socially invisible; control over the proceeds of their labour is transferred to male hands.

The production of rice—the major crop of Bangladesh—provides an important illustration of this process. Men are responsible for preparing the fields, for sowing the seeds, weeding and harvesting. They bring the harvest home and may help in the threshing. Women then take over and process the paddy into rice, the form in which it is eaten or sold. This includes parboiling and drying the paddy, husking (the most time-consuming aspect of the process), winnowing, sieving and storing the grain. Responsibility for marketing the paddy is taken on by men. In terms of labour input, women contribute about 1.5 days of labour to each maund (80lbs) of paddy, while men contribute between 4.5 and 6.5 days. In terms of value-added, however, women's labour is more productive contributing between 25 and 40 per cent of the total value.

Inequalities in Household Consumption

The systematic devaluation of women is manifested in their lesser claim to subsistence resources within the household. Women are quite literally a residual category in the distribution of food, eating after men and usually after children, and making do with what is left. This is partly self-imposed deprivation since it is women who cook, distribute and serve meals. But it is sanctioned by the widely held belief that the practice ensures the longevity and good fortune of the male guardians of the household. A number of studies of household food distribution show that women are most likely to suffer a shortfall in their daily calorie requirements and to suffer from severe malnutrition. There is also evidence of a similar imbalance in the resources devoted to the health of male and female members. While the family's health is regarded as primarily the responsibility of women, they have access only to the traditional village-based forms of medicine. It has been observed that where there is a clinic within the village, women are as likely to attend as men; there is a dramatic difference when the clinic is situated outside the village.⁹ Even when clinic facilities are offered free, boys are brought in more than twice as often as girls and are likely to be hospitalized more frequently.

The cumulative discrimination against women in the allocation of household resources appears to underlie sex differentials in mortality rates. Women have higher rates of mortality in almost every age group. Biologically, the probability of death is higher among male infants, but this pattern is visible in Bangladesh only in the first month, before the effects of social discrimination are felt. By the end of the first year, the biological pattern is reversed, and in the first four years of their lives half again as many female children die as male. The differences in mortality rates during times of crisis bring the social ordering of priorities into sharp relief. One study compares male and female deaths during the famine of 1974-75 with those in the following year which was considered normal. It found that the gap between male and female deaths among children widened even further during famine and concluded that 'increased mortality during disaster was disproportionately

⁹ Lincoln C. Chen, Emadedul Haq and Sean D'Souza 'Sex Bias in the Family Allocation of Food and Health in Rural Bangladesh', *Population and Development Review* 7(12), p. 64

experienced by young girls.¹⁰ The fact that over the longer period 1974-77 an excess of female deaths over male was evident among all social classes suggests, however, that sex differentials in mortality cannot simply be attributed to competition for insufficient resources, but must reflect a systematic discrimination against girls.

Gender, Class and Social Power

While all women's life chances are thus constrained within very rigidly defined boundaries, women do not by any means constitute an undifferentiated social category. In a highly stratified society like Bangladesh, the intersection of gender relations with those of class means that the range of possibilities available to women varies considerably across the social order. In rural Bangladesh, the unequal distribution of social power and privilege rests on the ownership of land. Control over land implies control over the labour and loyalty of others and increasingly the ability to benefit from the new aid-financed public sector resources—government employment, subsidized credit and inputs—flowing into the countryside.

Although Islamic law gives a daughter the right to inherit half the son's share of patrimonial property, the right is more formal than real. The strict enforcement of *purdah* means that women can neither cultivate the land themselves nor negotiate directly in the market for labour and other inputs. Such functions have to be mediated by their male representatives who thereby gain *de facto* control over the land and its produce. Women's control is further weakened by the practice of village exogamy; married women tend to live some distance away from their father's property and must rely on others to represent their interests. Furthermore, most women waive their rights to the land in favour of their brothers. Dependent on male protection, they bargain away their right to land in exchange for the promise of kin support in times of distress. Such support is prescribed by religious and cultural norms, but it is more likely to be forthcoming if women renounce their claims.

Nevertheless, while women as a gender category have few independent rights to the means of production, as members of wealthy households they enjoy certain privileges through their role in distributing a valuable resource to landless women in the form of employment opportunities. The demand for female labour comes primarily from wealthy households who signal their superior social status by freeing their female members from menial household work and substituting hired female labour. It is the responsibility of the women in these households to recruit and supervise such labour, and determine its terms of employment. The inequality of this relationship is exacerbated by its informal and personalized nature which allows rates of remuneration, hours of work and the range of tasks to be determined at the discretion of the employer. Employment arrangements between rich and poor women are usually closer to feudal than commercial: 'Women from a number of poor households may be at the beck and call of the rich households for

¹⁰ Stan D'Sozza and Lincoln C. Chen, 'Sex Differentials in Mortality in Rural Bangladesh', *Population and Development Review* 6(2) p. 264.

various services as needed, often without even having to be asked. . . . For some of these services, there will be no immediate return; for others, some of the food being processed or prepared."¹¹ Thus women from landowning households do enjoy a limited degree of social power through their relations with landless women even though the ultimate source of their power resides in the wealth of their men.

Changes in Social Relations

The mechanisms of women's oppression have, however, been affected by recent social and economic developments. While purdah continues to be a powerful cultural ideal, its practice has been modified in the wake of the social upheavals and economic crises of recent decades. New opportunities have been opened up for some sections of the population while landlessness and poverty have intensified for the rest. As far as the social relations of gender are concerned, a number of contradictory trends are apparent.

Since Independence, the rural economy has received a steady flow of aid-financed resources as a result of development strategies emphasizing agricultural productivity. Land is no longer the only basis of power within the rural hierarchy. Aid-brokerage offers new forms of patronage, while employment in the public sector opens up new channels for upward mobility. Both class and gender have been important variables mediating access to the new resources. Male members of the rural elite have been the prime beneficiaries but female members have enjoyed some limited advantages. Economic pressure is forcing women from all segments of society to seek employment, in contrast to the earlier situation when only women from the poorest landless families sought paid work. Women from better-off families, however, are able to find, or to redefine, employment opportunities consistent with their status. Government service is considered a respectable form of employment for middle class women. Government intervention in the field of population control and health has provided a large number of new jobs that entail contact with a mainly female clientele; some claim to purdah can therefore be maintained.

Nevertheless, for the majority of the population in the countryside old forms of family organization are gradually being eroded as impoverishment and the loss of landed assets undermine the material basis of kinship solidarity and co-operation—the 'moral economy' of the peasantry. The impact of these changes has varied for women and men. Landlessness has meant that both women and men have lost the basis of their productive role within household-based production and have been forced to resort to the labour market. The difference is that the choices available are much broader for men because of the absence of social constraints on their mobility. They are free to pursue the most remunerative forms of employment, commensurate with their skills, available in the wider economy. Limitations on women's physical mobility have confined them to the informal, undervalued and hidden margins of the

¹¹ Tahrunnessa Abdullah and Sondra A. Zeidenstein, *Village Women of Bangladesh. Prospects for Change*, Pergamon Press, Oxford p. 43

labour market. In general their paid work has represented a simple extension to the market of their traditional responsibilities; domestic chores and rice processing provide an important source of livelihood for poorer women. Increasing numbers of wealthy farmers, however, are dispensing entirely with hired labour in favour of recently introduced mechanical rice mills. The resulting fall in the demand for female labour has led to a fall in their real wages.

The integration of male members of the population—from all classes—into the wider cash economy and the undermining of the productive role of women within the peasant household may underlie the recent emergence of a system of dowry in Bangladesh. In the past, the Muslim custom of *mahr* was observed in Bangladesh. The bride, and sometimes her family, would receive gifts for personal use, such as jewellery and clothes, from her husband's family. In addition, part of the *mahr* was deferred and could be claimed in cash by the wife if she was divorced without reason; *mahr* theoretically at least could act as a deterrent to divorce. The bride herself brought a dowry consisting of moveable assets, such as household utensils, to contribute to the conjugal estate, but these remained her property.

Over the last 20–30 years there has been a shift in the emphasis in the marriage contract to the bride's dowry, the groom and his family now becoming the main beneficiaries. This has been accompanied by a steady inflation of the demands made by the groom's family, while the form of the dowry has changed to include modern consumer and producer durables which become the personal property of the groom. This reversal in the flow of wealth at marriage may reflect the underlying economic reality that 'the income potential of the groom now surpasses previously valued attributes of the bride.'¹² Under this system, men no longer face any penalties at divorce. For poorer men, there is an incentive to marry more than once since marriage often represents their only means of acquiring forms of wealth they could not otherwise afford. These considerations, together with the considerable economic stress faced by their families, mean that poor and landless women are facing higher rates of divorce and desertion than ever before. The incidence of female-headed households—i.e. households headed by women who have not been successful in retaining any male protection—is highest among the poorest layers of society.

As traditional forms of female employment are eroded by mechanization or are simply failing to keep up with the growth in the female labour force, poorer women are being gradually forced into more public areas of employment. A report on the 1976 Food-for-Work Project¹³ noted that a third of the workers were women and that they had sought employment without any formal encouragement from the government or from project managers. The report commented that, while Bangladesh had considerable experience with rural works programmes particu-

¹² Shirley Lindenbaum, 'Implications for Women of Changing Marriage Transactions in Bangladesh', *Studies in Family Planning* 12(11), p. 399.

¹³ Marty Chen and Ruby Ghumavi, *Women in Food-for-Work, The Bangladesh Experience*, World Food Programme, Rome 1979, p. 13.

larly during the sixties, the participation of women was a radical departure. Nor did these women fit in with the traditional categories of destitute women (that is, widowed, divorced or abandoned) who had sought paid employment in the past. For the first time, married women were also seeking employment.

Another course open to women has been migration to the cities in search of work. Some go into domestic service, others end up begging or in prostitution. For women the city offers a greater likelihood of finding some means of livelihood. In addition, it is preferable to being seen working in their family village where they could bring shame to other members of their kinship group. Women who have been forced by economic imperatives into public forms of work are particularly bitter about the discrepancy between the social ideal of purdah and the choices available to them. One of the women working on the Food-for-Work Project commented, 'When I first started working to support myself, people had much to say against it. I knew that no one would give me a meal, so why should I care about their opinions? They said the world had become a hell, with women working in the fields and roads. I paid no heed to them. People with empty stomachs do not have to worry about social norms. If begging does not hamper my self-respect, why should hard work erode my dignity?'¹⁴

Since the early eighties, a new form of urban employment has become available for women. One of the consequences of the country's increasing integration into the international economy has been the emergence of a new export-oriented garment industry employing mainly young, unmarried girls. This has meant not only the creation almost overnight of a first generation female industrial workforce—over 100,000 women now work in the garment industry—but also for the first time a work force composed mainly of young single women, a category traditionally subject to the most severe forms of social control. Large numbers have migrated from the countryside on their own and are living in unconventional makeshift arrangements, often sharing rooms with each other, without any form of male guardianship. The ramifications of these various changes for women's autonomy could be profound. But their potential can only be realized if there is conscious and organized resistance by women to any attempts by the family, the employers or the state to contain these changes within the limits of the existing system of gender relations.

Summary

Each element in the prevailing system of gender relations helps to sustain and reinforce its internal logic—the devaluation and dependence of women. The patriarchal–patrilineal–patrilocal family ensures that control over material resources—land, capital and labour processes of women and children—is vested in male hands. By marrying out, women are cut off from the potential support and solidarity of their own kin for most of their lives and forced to reorient their loyalties to a household of strangers. Men monopolize the use of space; purdah

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

ensures that 50 per cent of the population is confined to about 10 per cent of the available space. Purdah also detaches women's productive labour from control over its proceeds, thereby obscuring its value and enforcing their dependence.

If women have so far appeared to acquiesce in their own subordination, it is partly due to the power of prevailing gender ideologies and their own internalization of these norms and values. It is also because the extreme asymmetry of the relationships between women and men in effect denies women any options apart from those prescribed by the system. The 'patriarchal bargain'¹⁵ is based on this asymmetry. Men monopolize all socially valued resources and mediate the social order. In return, women can expect male protection and provision. Without such protection and patronage, they would have to face the full range of social sanctions against women on their own, including the threat of male violence.

In spite of the obvious strength of the system, there is evidence of changes in the social order as some of the assumptions underlying the gender hierarchy begin to look increasingly untenable. The increase in the numbers of divorces and desertions, the emergence of female-headed households and of a female labour force outside culturally prescribed boundaries, all reflect the unwillingness or inability of men to discharge their responsibilities towards their dependents—women and children. This outcome is to some extent predictable. Women's claims on male protection are inscribed in cultural norms and traditions, while men's authority is based on their control over material resources. Normative claims while powerful have proved relatively malleable in the face of economic necessity.¹⁶ While this constitutes a breakdown of the 'patriarchal bargain' for large numbers of women, it has meant that women's dependent status is being increasingly called into question and that a potential now exists for a popular movement for women's rights.

III. The Struggle for Change

Beginnings and Evolution: Pre-Liberation Bangladesh

Women have been active in a sporadic fashion in Bangladesh's history. They have acted as enlightened individuals, speaking out against excessive aspects of women's subordination. One example is Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain whose essays and short stories caricatured the practice of purdah in the early twentieth century. Women have participated in different political struggles, although gender-related issues were generally subordinated or completely absent from the agenda. Women were prominent for instance in the Tebagha Movement (1940s) in East Bengal which sought to retain a greater share of the harvest for the tenant farmer and in guerilla action against the British colonial administration. Women have also been involved in single-issue campaigns concerned with women's rights. They fought the attempts by the provincial

¹⁵ Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' in *Gender and Society* (forthcoming, September, 1988).

¹⁶ Mridu Chak, S.R. Khanam and S. Nahar 'Class, patriarchy and women's work in Bangladesh' *Population and Development Review* 13(1), p. 408

government to close down girls' schools in the immediate post-partition period; their demands for the reform of Muslim family law regarding the rights of men to marry and divorce at will led to the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance in 1961.

Another category of involvement, and one that gained increasing respectability during the Pakistan period, took the form of social welfare activities, that is, middle class women engaging in the 'moral uplift' of women from the poorer classes. In a segregated society, the idea of privileged women attending to the welfare of their less fortunate sisters appeared to have a commendable logic. The largest of the women's organizations which flourished in the Pakistan period was the All Pakistan Women's Association, founded in 1949 by the wife of the Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali. It was funded and sponsored by the Government and heavily dominated by the wives of government officials. Organizations such as APWA served as an important means of consolidating and reproducing status hierarchies within urban society.¹⁷ They provided wives of senior government officials and important social figures with a forum in which to display their own status while at the same time providing wives of lesser figures with a channel through which to make potentially useful contacts. Most of these organizations engaged in a range of activities that fell under the rubric of social welfare. These were generally aimed at raising funds (through fairs, bazaars, cultural evenings and fashion shows at prestigious locations) which were donated to various charitable undertakings for destitute women.

The class nature of such organizations meant that they had serious limitations as agencies of social change. Their welfare activities tended to be premised entirely on a division between 'them' and 'us': destitute women were seen as individual victims of unfortunate circumstances rather than as the more conspicuous casualties of an overarching patriarchal system which denied economic and social autonomy to all classes of women. The social gulf between the organizations and their intended beneficiaries meant that charitable endeavours were informed by an extremely conservative and middle class ideology which represented women primarily in a domestic role. Thus the services on offer tended to be family planning, sewing and embroidery classes and nutritional education. Finally, the voluntary basis on which welfare activities were undertaken meant that their links with women's rights and social justice were never raised.

Nevertheless, while there is no history of women organizing around specifically gender issues, aspects of gender ideology were contested throughout the Pakistan era, albeit in a submerged fashion. The uneasy tension between formal and local versions of religion in Bengali culture was often played out in the sphere of gender relations since its significance partly derived from conflicting interpretations of appropriate female behaviour. Pakistani society, for example, had always frowned on the Bengali middle class practice of training their daughters in the

¹⁷ Patricia Kaplan, in *Class and Gender in India*, Tavistock, London 1983, provides a detailed analysis of the role of women's welfare organizations in the process of status reproduction in Madras City.

arts—singing, dancing and drama—and allowing them to perform in public; it was seen as evidence of the strong Hindu influence on Bangladeshis. There were moments when these tensions took on a political dimension in the face of attempts by the Pakistani state to impose its own austere and puritanical version of Islam on Bangladesh. At such times, singing the songs of Tagore (a Hindu poet admired by all Bengalis), wearing bindis (a red spot on the forehead symbolic among Hindu women of their marital state, but adopted as a decoration by Bengali Muslim women) or simply being seen in public became acts of political dissent.¹⁸ This was particularly apparent in the nationalist movement preceding the setting up of Bangladesh. Massive demonstrations were held in Dhaka in which large contingents of women, dressed in traditional festive yellow and red saris, wearing bindis on their foreheads, and singing Bengali nationalist songs, including the songs of Tagore, spearheaded what was effectively a cultural resistance to the Pakistani regime.

The affronted sensibilities of the Muslim fraternity were avenged during the subsequent occupation of Bangladesh. One of the first acts of the Pakistani regime was to ban the songs of Tagore. It is worth noting that under the present regime in Pakistan, the sari has officially been declared unIslamic and cannot be worn on state occasions. Music and dance classes for women have also been banned. The most tragic victims of Pakistani hatred and suspicion, however, were the estimated 30,000 Bengali women who were raped by Pakistani soldiers in their mission to populate Bangladesh with 'true' Muslims.

The Present Phase

The first half of the seventies in many ways marked a watershed in attempts to deal with women's issues. Various currents within the society contributed to this. Most important perhaps was a gradual dawning of awareness among women themselves of the unequal social relationships in which their lives were embedded. For poorer women, the upheavals which marked the early years of the decade (the cyclone of 1970, the War of Liberation of 1971, the famine of 1974) may have merely confirmed what they already knew: in times of crisis, women are the earliest casualties. The events of the early seventies also had a traumatic effect on the consciousness of many middle class women who had hitherto been insulated from the harsher realities of gender subordination. The rape of thousands of Bangladeshi women—from all classes—during the occupation of Bangladesh was followed after Liberation by a period of lawlessness when armed Bengali gangsters abducted women and forced them into 'sten-gun weddings'. For some groups of middle class women, this period may have marked the birth of a feminist consciousness in the sense of revealing the common thread of oppression uniting them with poorer women. Their engagement in struggles around women's rights is less marked by the 'them' and 'us' premises of earlier women's organizations.

¹⁸ Rahnuma Ahmed, 'Women's Movement in Bangladesh and the Left's Understanding of the Women Question', *Journal of Social Studies*, No. 30, p. 47.

The beginning of the seventies was also the period when the women's movement gained momentum in the West and began to make itself heard in the politics of foreign aid. It challenged the assumptions and priorities that had so far directed development aid and demanded that women's interests be specifically taken into account rather than left to a dubious trickle-down process. The growing international concern with the status of women was reflected in the policies of aid donors towards Bangladesh. They sought to modify their previous single-minded focus on women as wives, mothers and targets of family planning programmes and evinced a greater interest in women's productive roles. Some of the positive effects of donor policy in Bangladesh were the introduction of a new and potentially progressive vocabulary into official discourse on women—the vocabulary of women's emancipation—and development projects which addressed women's economic roles in society.

In an aid-dependent country like Bangladesh, the leverage of foreign donors is considerable. At the same time, successive governments have been able to exploit the rhetoric and resources of the Women and Development lobby to bolster their image in the national and international arenas. The post-liberation state has taken an increasingly interventionist stance in the sphere of women's issues. While state policy has not been exactly benign—in spite of the rhetoric, it still rests on very conservative and paternalistic assumptions about women—it has resulted in an increased flow of resources to women (or some women) and a greater awareness of the woman question in the public sphere.

These various influences within post-liberation Bangladesh have combined to produce a very fragmented and uneven, but nevertheless discernible, social movement to improve the situation of women. Its fragmentation arises from the fact that it is made up of groups and organizations who do not appear either to share a common analysis of women's oppression or to agree on a common set of priorities and strategies to bring about social change. Indeed, it would be difficult to classify many of the existing women's organizations as feminist in the strict sense of the word. Some continue to conflate women's rights with social welfare, while others deny the specificity of women's oppression, subsuming it instead under the wider social contradiction of class. Nevertheless, in as much as they are all involved in the attempt to improve the situation of women, they may be included in the embryonic women's movement in Bangladesh.

The Role of the State

The recent development of various women's organizations, and the constraints within which they operate, have in large part been defined by the increasingly visible, interventionist and often contradictory role the state has played in the post-liberation era. This new role was not apparent until after the assassination of Mujib. The Mujib regime was preoccupied with attempts to cope with the ravages of war, deteriorating law and order and the disastrous famine of 1974. It had little scope to deal specifically with the situation of women.

At the ideological level, however, the secular politics of the Awami League were more compatible with the idea of women's emancipation than were the theocratic politics of the Pakistani state. Bangladesh was declared a People's Republic after liberation, rather than an Islamic State, and a new constitution was introduced which embodied the principles of secularism, democracy, socialism and nationalism. The Awami League's espousal of these principles was derived from an analysis of the divisive political role played by religion in the nation's history and its links with Pakistani colonialism rather than any commitment to gender equality. It can be argued, however, that there was a fundamental contradiction between these principles and the extreme forms of gender subordination that could be countenanced within a state-sanctioned Islamic framework. The official secularism of the Awami League effectively favoured the 'customary, communal, pliable' version of Islam, which constituted the reality for the majority of people in the country, against the 'divine, theocratic, centralist and establishment-based' version favoured in Pakistan and the Middle East.¹⁹ By removing religious interpretation from the domain of the male theocratic establishment, the local tradition offered a version of religion that was relatively modifiable through contest and struggle.

Zia-ur Rahman's accession to power in 1975 coincided with the declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women. He was able to make overt and skilful use of the platform provided by the Women and Development lobby. A number of concessions were made to women. The Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) was the first, after nearly three decades of development planning, to give explicit consideration to strategies for integrating women into the development process. Ten per cent of all jobs in the public sector were reserved for women, and two women had to be appointed by the government to the union councils, the main unit of village administration. The Bangladesh Women's Rehabilitation Organization, set up in 1972 to administer to the needs of war widows and rape victims, was constituted as a statutory body in 1975 (International Women's Year) with a mandate to extend its activities to all poor women. In 1976, the National Women's Association was established to co-ordinate the activities of various governmental and non-governmental organizations, while in 1978 a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs was set up to assist the government in formulating policies and programmes for women and children. Despite its progressive rhetoric, women and children continue to be inextricably linked as far as the state is concerned.

Development programmes initiated by the Ministry have been hampered by the fundamental paternalism and class bias of the state. Their design reflects their urban middle class priorities and they rarely operate successfully at village level. Population control remains the underlying objective for many of the projects. The difference from earlier programmes is that women are now offered economic opportunities in order to motivate them to accept contraceptives. This approach is based on a simple rationale summed up in the philosophy of the Mothers'

¹⁹ B K Jahangir, *Problematics of Nationalism in Bangladesh*, Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka University, 1986, p. 79

Clubs, sponsored by the World Bank: 'When a woman touches the first taka she has earned with her own labour, she feels liberated and her fertility behaviour changes to a great extent.'²⁰ The strategy of the Clubs is to train women for income generating activities so that their status in the household and society improves and they feel 'liberated'. Unfortunately, there is little scope within such programmes for developing any real autonomy for women or integrating them into self-sustaining mainstream forms of employment. Their training activities are geared to the production of handicrafts for elite urban consumer markets whose dynamics are outside the experience of most poor women. In any case, the demand for such goods is notoriously fickle and the first to dry up in an economic downturn. With the exception of the actual production stage, the women know little about the activities in which they are being trained. With basket weaving, for instance, the social workers are responsible for providing the women with grass and palm leaves to make the baskets, for paying them for their labour and for organizing the marketing of the products. The women themselves remain passive participants throughout the process.

A parallel approach for channelling development resources toward women has been the formation of women's co-operatives. Co-operatives had existed in the country since the early sixties to organize and serve male farmers. They became directly relevant to women only in 1975 with the establishment of the Integrated Rural Development Programme's Pilot Project in Population Planning and Rural Women's Co-operatives to 'explore the ways to integrate rural women in social and economic development.' Unlike other government initiatives, this Project acknowledged the predominantly rural character of the population by basing itself in the villages and addressing women's agricultural activities. It encouraged women to form co-operatives separate from men because experience showed that men tended to dominate the proceedings and monopolize the distribution of benefits within the co-operative. The aims of the IRDP co-operatives were to impart training and services to women in order to increase their productivity, to inform them about family planning measures and to teach them literacy and leadership skills so that they could represent their own interests. To become members with entitlement to loans, women have to purchase a share in the co-operative. Members also save on a weekly basis and deposit their savings in a joint bank account. The co-operative runs a credit scheme which distributes individual loans and which funds various small enterprises started up by members, such as livestock or poultry raising, or purchasing paddy to process at home and re-sell at a small profit.

Although the IRDP Women's Project has broken with tradition in recognizing that women may suffer in joint co-operatives with men because of their subordinate social status, there is no recognition of class divisions between women. They are assumed always to share a common set of problems arising out of their status in a patriarchal

²⁰ Cited in Joke Van der Haan and Sultana Krippendorf, *Remember the Words of the Poor*, Report of the Mission on Women and Emancipation to Bangladesh, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, 1981, p. 22

system. Yet the co-operatives cannot bypass other social relations, and each one reproduces the tensions and contradictions of the community in which it is located. Inevitably, women from wealthier households are able to exploit the material resources available through the co-operative and to divert its activities to serve their own interests. The initial outlay and weekly savings necessary for membership tend to exclude poorer women, while the process of building leadership qualities has given wealthier and more educated women a monopoly of offices and positions within the co-operative. As one study puts it, 'Reference to the names of the co-operative secretaries and office-holders inevitably leads one to a prosperous *barr* (homestead) with well maintained tin roofs, many cows, a spacious yard and other signs of wealth.' The same study also concludes that, in spite of the agricultural orientation of the training offered, it remains inappropriate to the majority of poor rural women, who ask 'What is the use of learning how to grow vegetables if you have no land?'²¹

The Cynicism of State Policy

Successive post-liberation governments have skilfully and cynically manipulated the rewards of identification with the Women and Development lobby. Development initiatives for women can be seen as part of an attempt to contain potential rural unrest and politicization arising out of the polarization and landlessness produced by the state's agricultural policy. Such initiatives also helped the military regime to gain civilian legitimacy.²² By showing his concern for women's welfare, Zia was able to mobilize an important constituency for himself and his newly founded Bangladesh National Party in the national elections. Finally, it enabled him to gain international credibility, particularly among Western funders, as a modern and progressive leader and a champion of women's rights. In view of the large amount of funding available for women's projects and the opportunities for political patronage in the distribution of the funds, this policy had an immediate and practical payoff.

The cynicism at the core of state policy towards women is brought into sharp relief when that policy is considered in its totality. Zia's government was not simply pro-American, it also began the drift back to the Islamic state. The West after all was not the only source of funds for Bangladesh. The OPEC countries, most importantly Saudi Arabia, had also entered the ranks of aid donors. In 1977 Zia deleted the principle of secularism from the constitution, replacing it with 'an absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah' and adding, 'The state shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.' In 1980 he announced his intention to declare Bangladesh an Islamic state again. The matter was quietly dropped after the public outcry expressed both in the press and on the streets. While it is not clear to what extent these moves to reassert Islamic values were in deference to Saudi sensibilities, it should be noted that Saudi Arabia refused to recognize the new state of

²¹ Ibid, p. 20.

²² Meghna Guhathakurta, 'Gender Violence in Bangladesh: the Role of the State', *Journal of Social Studies*, No. 30, p. 81.

Bangladesh until a year after the assassination of Mujib and Zia's accession to power.

Clearly, playing to the Saudi gallery carried a different set of gender implications from those associated with the Women and Development lobby. In contrast to goals of women's emancipation, the Middle Eastern influence sought to strengthen traditional Islamic values, including the withdrawal of women from the public sphere and their seclusion within the home. Zia's strategy, and that of Ershad after him, has been a blatant balancing act between the conflicting gender ideologies implicit in different aid packages. Aid from the Muslim countries has been channelled into strengthening the *madrassa* (religious education system) in the countryside, thereby strengthening forms of social control that disproportionately affect women. The government also pours money into the Islamic Foundation—which has published several tracts condemning family planning—at the same time as it supports US-funded attempts at population control.²³ The contradictions in state policy on women are highlighted in an example cited by Guhathakurtha.²⁴ As a consequence of Zia's 10 per cent quota of jobs for women, large numbers joined the metropolitan police for the first time in the country's history. Not only is the nature of the job essentially different from traditionally accepted forms of employment for women, but it entailed a uniform which represented a break from traditional attire: trousers and shirt, rather than the sari. Initially women were required to operate on the street controlling traffic, but they were soon withdrawn to perform indoor duties only, either within roadside traffic control booths or at check points. One reason for this policy change is said to be Saudi government pressure: 'obviously maintaining a women police force which operated on the streets did not quite tally with the values being cultivated by an aspiring Islamic state.'²⁵ Recently, too, Ershad announced a ban on the participation of women in spectator sports before a mixed audience, but this prohibition appears to have been shelved.

These shifts and contradictions within state policy are possible only because the state itself regards the issue of women's rights in essentially instrumentalist terms. There has been no real commitment on the part of any government to women's rights as an end in itself. In spite of the increased rhetoric and resources directed at women's productive role, the hidden agenda of almost all government interventions in this area is dictated by alarmist neo-Malthusian predictions. The government has been able to accommodate the conflicting demands of the Saudis and Americans by preaching Islam while practising population control. Some degree of coherence has been granted to government policy by the fact that both the Saudis and the US have the long-term interests of private capital at heart. Consequently, although Saudi sensibilities may have been affronted by the increasing numbers of women who appear on the streets of Dhaka on their way to work in the new garment factories, they have not yet attempted to interfere in the private sector.

²³ Ahmed, p. 49

²⁴ Guhathakurtha, p. 86

²⁵ *Ibid*

However cynical the motives of the state in its championing of women's rights, it has permitted some genuine advances in women's interests. The policies have challenged the monopoly of archaic ideological preconceptions about women in Bangladesh society. They have helped to sensitize sections of the bureaucracy to women's needs and permitted some fruitful collaboration between local government and development agencies. Finally, they have provided an ideological space for the emergence of grass-roots organizations which directly confront the structures of women's oppression.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

Since the birth of Bangladesh the number of non-governmental development organizations has steadily grown. Funded by private and official aid, many of them sprang up in response to the catastrophic events of 1971 but have evolved from relief agencies into development organizations. Some of them model themselves on government-run projects, channelling resources into income-generating activities, credit and health services as a route to population control. A second category of organizations has also emerged, however, whose strategies incorporate a class and gender perspective. Such organizations have moved away from the earlier preoccupation with the manifestations of poverty and instead are directing their energies to tackling its root causes. Recognizing that conventional attempts at development have merely privileged those in power—the wealthy at the expense of the landless, men at the expense of women—these organizations deal exclusively with those made powerless by the present system—landless and near-landless men and women. The primary objective of the new grassroots organizations is to build the organizational capacity of the landless. Men and women are generally organized in separate groups. An important part of the process of group formation is 'conscientization' (a form of consciousness-raising using the pedagogic methods developed by Paulo Freire). Feminist issues, such as male violence, dowry, divorce, polygamy, and class issues—wages, land rights, patronage—are raised in group training sessions and related to the wider social structures.

The provision of the conventional range of welfare and productive services is often used as a means of reaching the landless population. However, at least one NGO has eschewed the policy of providing any material resources at all. Its strategy stems from the analysis that the fundamental problem in Bangladesh lies in the structure of distribution, and the power relations underlying it, rather than in the availability of resources. It believes that the distribution of material resources by grass-roots organizations carries the danger of establishing new bonds of dependence in place of the traditional ones and interferes with the objective of building the independent organizations of the landless.

The specific objective of grassroots NGOs in working with landless women is to promote an understanding of their collective oppression and develop their organizational ability to challenge it. Women's apparent passivity in the face of their oppression is seen as a product of their isolation and a lack of real alternatives. Village women use metaphors like 'frogs in a well' and 'oxen turning the grindstone' to convey their sense

of their circumscribed lives. The only relationships open to them are characterized by dependency and subordination. The women's groups initiated by the NGOs are organizations they can choose to belong to, unlike those based on family, kinship or patronage where their consent is never sought and where their interests are always subservient.

The innovative strategies pursued by grassroots NGOs represent an important break with past efforts to transform women's lives. First, they are usually rural based and thus able to reach the majority of the population who generally fall outside the orbit of traditional women's organizations. Secondly, they attach far greater significance to the power of ideology in defining options than have any alternative organizations. By recognizing that attempts to combat women's oppression have to begin with the consciousness of men and women, these NGOs have extended the arena of struggle for women's rights in Bangladesh. Mobilization of rural women in defence of their right to fair wages on rural works programmes in recent times and their militancy on such occasions suggest that in certain sections of the population, old habits of female deference and submissiveness are finally being abandoned.

The Role of Political Organizations

According to the Bangladesh constitution, 30 seats in the national legislature are reserved for women to be nominated by the elected members. In theory, this does not preclude them from standing in open election for the other 300 seats. In practice, it has meant that the general seats have come to be identified as male,²⁶ while the ruling party is able to call on the guaranteed support of an additional 30 members. As a result, women in the national parliament have no popular base and are denied an equal status with those who have been elected. It has been pointed out that the constraints on women putting themselves forward as candidates are due to their lack of independent sources of finance and of the opportunities to establish themselves in the party leadership.²⁷ Even if these constraints could be overcome, however, the conventions of purdah that identify the political sphere as male territory and the range of controls to exclude women would still constitute formidable obstacles. At the more violent end of the spectrum of controls is the threat of rape. While political sacrifice in the form of imprisonment is acceptable for the male activist, even a desirable precondition for success, for women participation in the public arena of politics carries the fear of abduction and rape by the police or by the opposition. The shame and humiliation that would have to be endured act as a powerful deterrent to most women contemplating entry into popular politics.

At the very least, women in any public arena face constant harassment. Razia Faiz, member of the Muslim League since 1961 and elected to parliament in 1979, described her experiences during the election campaign: 'The local people reacted strongly to the idea of a woman candidate, saying it was against Islam. They took away the microphone being used by the canvassers, stoning and abusing them in the process.'

²⁶ Najma Chowdhury 'Women's participation in political process in Bangladesh: Nature and Limitations', in *Women and Politics in Bangladesh*, Centre for Women and Development, Dhaka 1985, p. 3

²⁷ Ibid, p. 5

Public opinion had to be built painfully and slowly. Another day . . . while I was waiting to begin a meeting, no one would come forward to recite the holy Quoran, as is the usual practice for beginning any public gathering. The reason—a woman was going to address the meeting and therefore it was against religion. I took a bold step and announced over the microphone that if none came forward in 5 or 10 minutes, I would assume there were no Muslims in that area and I would recite verses from the Quoran myself. . . . After a few minutes, an old man came forward and performed the task, but he insisted that he was doing it because he did not want a woman to prove herself superior (to) the males present. . . . Many such incidents were encountered during the campaign period.²⁸

In view of the strong social sanctions against the participation of women in politics in Bangladesh, the prominence of a number of women in the official opposition is paradoxical. Two decades ago, Miss Jinnah, sister of the first President of Pakistan was chosen to lead the joint opposition against Ayub Khan. At present the daughter and wife of two assassinated national leaders, Mujib and Zia respectively, lead their parties. Such paradoxes arise out of rather special circumstances. First, close family ties with prominent men are used to cash in on their reputations or to win a sympathy vote, particularly potent in the case of victims of political assassinations. In all the three cases cited here there were no male relatives close enough to the dead politician to invoke the same degree of sympathy. Secondly, in countries like Bangladesh, where kinship ties are still an important basis of social relationships, nominating relatives for power is seen as an expression of normal family loyalties rather than as an example of nepotism. In addition, for women the need to preserve a chaste and virtuous reputation means that political patronage is socially acceptable only when it is channelled through kinship connections. Women who are related to powerful politicians are more likely to succeed in politics without public suspicion of their morals. Lastly, the choice of a woman in the leadership is often regarded as a soft option while contending interests within the party battle it out for power—though, of course, this carries the risk (as in the case of Begum Zia apparently) that the woman chosen is not content to be a mere surrogate for a dead man but proves to be a real force in politics.

The mainstream political parties have not in fact concerned themselves very much with women's issues. The Awami League does not contain any clause in its constitution relating to the rights of women, although the Bangladesh National Party does (in deference to Zia's much publicized identification with women's causes). Their women's fronts function primarily to canvass support for their respective parties. They profess to seek 'equal status' for women, but this translates into seeking greater respect and value for the roles of wife and mother. In general, women in the mainstream parties act as lobbyists, exerting informal pressure on influential men to reform family and personal law. They rarely concern themselves with women outside the domestic sphere and still tend to see employment as an issue only for 'destitute women'.

²⁸ Razia Faiz 'Experiences of a Woman Politician' *Women and Politics in Bangladesh*, Centre for Women and Development, Dhaka 1985, p. 15.

The Left

The left wing parties also have women's fronts, but channel their energies into unionizing women workers. Most of them have their own unions as part of a strategy to build a base in the working class. Consequently unions tend to be as concerned with expanding political allegiance to their respective parties as they are with defending the rights of workers. Women activists are deemed essential, since social segregation inhibits contact between male trade unionists and women workers, but men have retained control at every level of the union and party bureaucracy.

The largest and most active of the left women's fronts is Mahila Parishad, founded in 1969. It is linked to the Communist Party of Bangladesh, but includes mainly non-party progressive women in its ranks. As the nationalist movement was gathering momentum, it became clear to many student activists that it was necessary to mobilize women in support of the struggle and that this would have to be done by women. Although a number of parties were approached to help set up such an organization, in the end it was mainly women linked with the CPB who founded Mahila Parishad.

Since Independence, Mahila Parishad has campaigned on a wider range of issues than most of the other left fronts. As its present Secretary points out, it is not possible to reach the vast majority of women in a segregated society through conventional party politics.²⁹ It has kept up the pressure to implement the ten per cent quota of jobs for women, fought for working women's rights in middle class occupations as well as in the garment and pharmaceutical industries, spearheaded a campaign against dowry, founded a committee to investigate violence against women and set up a shelter for women who have been victims of violence. Mahila Parishad represents the country's only mass women's organization. It now has over 30,000 members and is capable of mobilizing women around both local and national issues. Its theoretical analysis however remains tied to—and limited by—the orthodox Marxism of the CPB and other left wing parties: 'viewed in its true perspective, women's problems are closely linked with the whole socio-economic system.'³⁰ Women's oppression is seen as arising out of private property and class relations, and the solution is thought to lie in the overthrow of the present capitalist system.

There is of course a critical absence in Mahila Parishad's analysis of the interplay between the capitalist mode of production and the oppression of women. The role of men in mediating and benefiting from the subordination of women is never raised. The ideological structures which help to contain women in their proper place have not been tackled, except in impersonal and distancing forms such as the colonial legacy, religion and superstition. The Bengali ideal of deference and femininity in women is sometimes defended on cultural grounds: 'In

²⁹ Maieka Begum, personal interview, 1987.

³⁰ Maieka Begum, 'Women's Participation in Politics in Bangladesh: its Nature and Limitations', in *Women and Politics in Bangladesh*, Centre for Women and Development, Dhaka 1985, p. 17.

many countries of the west, the recent women's liberation movement has assumed an ultra-radical posture. Women in groups are deserting the company of men, but at the same time are imitating men in order to establish their rights; sacrificing woman's natural gentleness and beauty at the altar of the movement, they are trying their hardest to become as cruel, muscular, hairy (sic) and harsh as men.⁷³¹ The insertion of 'men' into Mahila Parishad's analysis of women's oppression could help to demonstrate the need to challenge the legitimacy of male authority and to put forward the idea of women's autonomy. The implications of Mahila Parishad's rejection of sexual politics were evident in its recent campaign to mobilize public opinion around what has turned out to be one of the major issues of the eighties for women in Bangladesh—male violence.

Although the memory of the violence done to women during the liberation war and in its aftermath has not been eradicated, those were seen as aberrant times when normal law and order had broken down. Isolated incidents of male violence occasionally reported in the press could also be dismissed as the inexplicable acts of individual men. The press, however unwittingly, played a constructive role in sparking off a major campaign on the question of male violence against women. A ban on media coverage of political events by the martial law regime under Ershad in 1985 deprived journalists of their usual stories and forced them to seek out alternative material. Their decision to focus on crime turned into a sudden and startling upsurge in coverage of violence against women—rapes, abductions, dowry deaths, acid throwing and mutilation. This intensive coverage sparked off public outrage and a number of women's organizations dealing with legal questions, research, development, as well as groups active in politics, took up the issue.

Mahila Parishad played a prominent role in the ensuing campaign. Mass meetings were held all over the country and were attended by diverse organizations which had never worked together before. What was significant about Mahila Parishad's tactics was the prominent platform it gave to influential men, chosen for their position in public life or within the party. Thus, men as a category were not implicated in any way in the apparent powerlessness of women in the face of male violence. Indeed these men were invited in their traditional role of guardians and protectors of women—'it could have happened to my mother/wife/sister'—in order to give legitimacy to the women's protest. In the end, Mahila Parishad like most of the left parties focused its energies on attacking the government's ability to maintain law and order. Ershad responded by making acid throwing a capital offence and pointing to the break down of law and order under previous regimes.

An alternative Women's Forum emerged during the campaign against male violence which consisted of a group of women, belonging to different organizations, who felt uneasy with the way the campaign was being conducted. They saw it as perpetuating the helpless and powerless roles traditionally ascribed to women and staged a walkout at one public

⁷³¹ Hasina Begum Bangladeshier Narimukti Andolonor Potobhumi, in *Shaktira Shakti*, August, 1978, cited in Ahmed, p. 53.

meeting where, of the twelve speakers from the platform, only three were women. They demanded that women be seen as leading the fight against male violence rather than relying yet again on male protection. They also felt that Mahila Parishad was choosing to sidestep the issue of domestic violence. An analysis of newspaper reports had revealed that the majority of violent incidents had been perpetrated on women by relatives rather than by strangers. In other words, the attackers were more likely to be those who had been morally entrusted with protecting women rather than the unknown 'male beast' on the streets. To confront the issue of domestic violence, however, would have made the left opposition's attack on the government less sustainable. It would also have carried the danger of raising disturbing questions about personal relationships and bringing the struggle—hitherto safely confined to the 'political' arena—uncomfortably close to home.

Conclusion

It is now nearly two decades since Bangladesh gained its independence. Even a cursory glance at what has been achieved during this time is sufficient to reveal the hollowness of the promises held out by the Bangladesh ruling class in the heady aftermath of liberation, the promises of a state built on the principles of secularism, democracy, nationalism and socialism. Secularism was officially abandoned with the assassination of Mujib, and every attempt has since been made by the state to return the country to its former Islamic status. The commitment to democracy was also shortlived: the population is now presented with the choice between a military government dressed in civilian clothing and an inept and divided opposition. Nationalism has proved to be a mockery in a country so dependent on foreign aid that its repercussions reach into the most personal areas of life. And finally, the promise of socialism was never more than rhetoric. Those who held out for radical transformation of society are either dead or have gone underground.

This article has attempted to point out how women have experienced these failures in specific ways that are contingent on their already precarious place in the social order. The patriarchal family system in Bangladesh is looking increasingly shaky, and it is now apparent that its ability to maintain large numbers of women in a state of material and social dependency can no longer be guaranteed. The obverse—and hopeful—side of this is that women themselves have less of a stake in maintaining the present asymmetrical system of gender relations. It is precisely at such moments of rupture that social movements for change are often born, and perhaps we are witnessing such a process gathering force in Bangladesh. The experiences of women in Pakistan and Iran demonstrate graphically how reversible such gains can be if there is no mass mobilization of women to defend them. The optimistic message from Bangladesh is that, thanks to the active pressure of women's organizations in the country, the struggle for democratic rights, escalating rapidly now into direct confrontation with the military regime, is constantly reminded that the political and economic enfranchisement of women must constitute one of its central planks.

Early Christianity

The history of the early Christian church was traditionally written by clergymen—ecclesiastical historians or theologians—who had their own methods, criteria and style. In particular they tended to follow the example of their founder, Eusebius, in taking a teleological view of their subject, and consequently in discerning in the history of the church an unbroken thread of correct belief or orthodoxy leading from the age of the Apostles to the historiographer's own time. These assumptions, which affected even those who aspired to reject them, enabled the history of the church to be separated from that of late antique society, of which it was a part.

Edward Gibbon, as befitted a representative of the Enlightenment, tried to break away from this ecclesiastical particularism, but few of his immediate successors followed his example. In more recent times some of the pioneers of socialism saw in the rise and eventual triumph of Christianity a prefiguration of the transition from capitalism to socialism which they strove to realize. In so doing they tended to oversimplify matters and to interpret Christianity as primarily the ideology of an oppressed class. Among others Engels and Kautsky, and to some extent Lenin, fell into this trap. Since 1917 socialists have been concerned with more pressing problems than the history of the early church, and the 'oppressed class' theory has tended to recede into the background, without however being rejected. At the same time the development of sociology as an autonomous discipline and the renewed interest in late antiquity—itself in part a reflection of the deeper preoccupations of our own society—have led to new approaches, new questions and new answers to the old problem of how a group of dissident rural Palestinian Jews became the nucleus of an empire-wide and city-based religion, which eventually provided the dominant ideology of the European Middle Ages, and which today still plays an important role in much of the world.

In the last few years many books have appeared which look with fresh eyes at the history of the early church as part of the history of late

Roman society.¹ The two books which are the subject of the present review bear witness to the continuing interest which the topic arouses and to the stimulus which it provides to historical thought. Robin Lane Fox is an ancient historian. Like his earlier *Alexander the Great* (London, 1981), his present book, *Pagans and Christians*,² has become a best-seller, an expression to which I do not attach a pejorative sense. Long and beautifully written, the book offers an amazingly rich tapestry of fact and anecdote, narrative and argument, out of which emerge the complex and occasionally surprising continuities and breaks between the coexistent worlds of paganism and Christianity. It falls into three parts. The first describes pagan religious life in the second to fourth centuries—the relation of gods and their cults to cities and those who dwelt in them, and the many ways in which the gods communicated with their worshippers, by appearing visibly in dreams or waking visions, by speaking in oracles, by displaying their power in miraculous interventions. The second surveys the gradual spread of Christianity and some of its manifestations—asceticism and rejection of the world, prophecy and visions, reaction to intermittent persecution, in particular martyrdom and its effects, and the growth of episcopal authority. In the third part Lane Fox examines the relations within the church—or churches—between soft and hard Christians. This is not a book which can be summarized. But some important points emerge with striking clarity. First, paganism was not dying on its feet, as has often been suggested, and indeed still is, as by Alain Ducellier in his otherwise admirable *Byzance et le monde orthodoxe* (Paris 1986) who writes on p.22 à propos of the age of Constantine that ‘paganism, which was simply a combination of heterogeneous and often contradictory beliefs and cults, became more a cultural fact than a truly religious one; for the people, it was hardly more than a habit, and only the elites, who made it an essential element of their class-pride, gave it a deeper meaning.’ On the contrary, religious festivals and processions offered spectacle, food and fun to whole communities and at the same time served to confirm the social order. There was much private, non-official, ritual centred on an immense variety of cult sites. There were countless religious associations of the humble, which afforded a sense of belonging and reassurance, and which could provide some kind of paradigm for the small Christian communities in the cities, though it would be a mistake to see those communities as just another kind of religious association with limited aims. There seems to have been a growth or revival of the ‘mystery’ religions, in which myth and cult were inseparably linked, which were often concerned with life after death, and which were exclusive in a way in which public religious cults were not. These provided a pattern into which Jewish and Christian religious practices might be fitted—

¹ To mention only those in English, and with apologies for any inadvertent omissions, we have R.M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society*, London 1978; T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge 1981; P. Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley 1982; B. Croke and J. Harris, *Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Rome*, Sydney 1982; W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, New Haven and London 1983; R.M. Grant, *Christian Beginnings: Apocalypse in History*, London 1983; S. Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, Bloomington 1984; W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, London 1984; R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, New Haven and London 1984; R. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, New Haven and London 1984.

² Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, London 1986, Collins.

which perhaps explains why Christian writers of the period attack mystery cults with such ferocity.

All over the Greek world—though less in the Latin west; why?—oracles flourished as never before. Lane Fox gives a fascinating account of the *modus operandi* of some of them and of the questions addressed to them. Many fraudulent oracular responses circulated, a token of the demand for such things. The most noteworthy were the 'Chaldaean oracles', which gained the serious attention of Neoplatonists in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and the Sibylline oracles', which were given Jewish and Christian interpretations. The 'Chaldaean oracles' appeared in six printed editions in the course of the sixteenth century. And a thirteenth-century Franciscan friar, perhaps Thomas of Celano, paired the Sibyl with the Psalmist in the opening stanza of the magnificent sequence which still forms part of the Mass for the Dead in the western church:

*Dies irac, dies illa,
solvat saeculum in favilla,
teste David cum Sibylla.*

There seem to have been more prophetic and charismatic individuals around than in the early empire, though this may be the result of the patchiness of our sources. Men and women often dreamed of the pagan gods. Lane Fox has made good use of the handbook on interpretation of dreams by Artemidorus of Daldis (second century), which offers a rich quarry of information on ancient belief and feeling.

In the old days the gods had walked among men and 'stood beside' them—the phrase is Homer's—in moments of crisis. By late antiquity an epiphany was a rare, and usually profoundly alarming, occurrence. But oracles and dreams made the gods readily accessible to those who desired their help. They had not retired to some philosophical and comfortably upper-class heaven, but were very much in business here on earth. They were powerful, but unpredictable and terrible in their wrath. Much pagan religious behaviour was concerned with averting their anger, provoked by human neglect.

This was the religious background against which the minuscule and almost invisible Christian communities of the post-Apostolic age established themselves and slowly grew. In some domains their religion could offer the same satisfactions and consolations as the pagans derived from theirs. They had their prophets and their visionaries. Visiting or guardian angels took the place of protective deities. Lane Fox argues that their presence brought 'emotional warmth, reassurance and a sense of unity with surrounding nature', while the pagan gods, if they appeared, inspired fear and sometimes abject terror. This would need further examination. The Christians could provide demonstrations of supernatural power as good as those of any pagan deity. Not merely miracles of healing, which were common features of pagan and Christian religion alike, but spectacular displays of overwhelming energy. No matter that these feats are usually recounted in apocryphal texts. They are what Christians—and some pagans—believed and expected. Member-

ship of a Christian community certainly gave a sense of belonging as well as of a special divine protection.

But there were great differences between Christianity and any pagan cult. First, exclusiveness. 'Pagan theology', observes Lane Fox, 'could extend a peaceful coexistence to any worship which, in turn, was willing to coexist in peace.' Christians might be willing to coexist—they had little choice—but they demanded of their own members total and permanent rejection of all other religious beliefs and practices. This could lead to a degree of isolation from the larger community within which they lived, which could be at best tiresome, at worst dangerous. In apologetic works addressed to pagan readers—one wonders how many pagans ever read them—Christian writers such as Tertullian are over-anxious to emphasize the full part which Christians play in the life of their cities, which suggests that they were often perceived as withdrawn, secretive odd-balls.

Furthermore they valued virginity and celibacy—living like the angels. Ritual continence was familiar to pagans as a temporary state, a condition of religious purity. Permanent celibacy and avoidance of second marriages were not, and could be seen as threats to family continuity. Widows and virgins became almost orders in the Christian church long before Constantine. The reasons for this restriction of sexual activity were no doubt theological. In practice, and especially because of the general age discrepancy between spouses, it had important economic consequences. This is one of Lane Fox's more interesting insights. 'Bequests', he writes, 'were antiquity's swiftest routes to social advancement and increase of personal capital. By idealizing virginity and frowning on second marriage, the Church was to become a force without equal in the race for inheritance.'

The same actions could be carried out by pagans and Christians from very different motives and with very different results. The benefactions of the pagan upper classes were conferred on their fellow-citizens out of a sense of strictly defined public responsibility, and to confirm or enhance the status of the donor. Christian benefaction was in general restricted to fellow-Christians, and it was concerned with laying up treasures in Heaven.

Most important, perhaps, were differences in organization. Pagan religion was a hodge-podge of cults and practices of different origin and different status. Up to a point one could take one's pick. There was no coordination, no leadership. Christianity was in theory uniform in belief and practice everywhere and in fact great efforts were made to attain and maintain that ideal. The Christians had clergy. There were plenty of priests and priestesses in the pagan world. But their office was usually honorary, often part-time, and not infrequently temporary. And they seem to have had little authority outside the domain of ritual. Full-time, life-long professional priests who were responsible for the correct belief and moral welfare of their coreligionists were something quite new. From the first century priests were joined by bishops. At first these had to vie for leadership of their community with teachers. Clement of Alexandria and Origen wrote and taught and preached all

their lives, and clearly enjoyed immense prestige and authority among their fellow-Christians. But they were not bishops, and Clement never even mentions the bishop of Alexandria who was his contemporary. By the end of the second century the bishops had won. Appointed for life, in sole control of the funds of his church, arbiter of doctrine, empowered not merely to expel dissidents or awkward individuals from the community which he led, but even to condemn them to the fires of hell for eternity, the bishop was a figure without parallel in the pagan world. The Christians possessed a structure of leadership which pagan society lacked.

Lastly, the Christians were from time to time persecuted, and under Diocletian that persecution went beyond sporadic local nastiness and aimed at eliminating the leadership of the church. Why they were persecuted is an old question, to which the most complete and convincing answer was given by Geoffrey de Ste-Croix twenty-five years ago.³ There were martyrs, over-achievers who preferred to die, often gruesomely, rather than to renounce in a formal way their beliefs. The records of their trial, condemnation and death were carefully kept by the communities to which they belonged. No one ever died for Zeus, or Apollo, Serapis or Isis, Mithras or Hermes Trismegistus. Only the Manichaeans shared with the Christians, who detested them, the burden and the glory of martyrdom. 'The blood of the martyrs,' it has been said, 'is the seed of the church.' But was it? Were many drawn to Christianity by the steadfastness—or obstinacy—of the martyrs? There is little direct evidence that their fate contributed much to the spread of Christianity. Yet there they were, emphasizing publicly by their extraordinary behaviour some of the distinguishing features of the religion for which they chose to die.

Dimitris Kyratas is a sociologist who, unlike many of his colleagues, can read the Greek and Latin sources for the history of the early church. His book, *The Social Structure of the Early Christian Communities*, is very different from that of Lane Fox—shorter, less discursive and anecdotal, concentrating more narrowly on specific problems.⁴ As they are mostly problems which Lane Fox passes over rapidly, the two books are in a way complementary. He begins by surveying the changing approaches to the history of early Christianity since the Reformation, and is particularly interesting—though all too brief—on its place in early socialist thought. The body of the book is concerned with two much-discussed questions, both of which turn on the social origins and composition of Christian communities from the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles till the age of Constantine. He faces squarely the methodological problem of the definition of classes in ancient society. Modern theories of class he finds unhelpful, and prefers to follow the 'spontaneous sociology' of contemporary informants, while trying to introduce as much rigour as possible.

The first question is whether Christianity is to be regarded as the

³ 'Why were the Early Christians Persecuted', *Past & Present* 26 (1963), pp. 6-38, reprinted in M.I. Finley (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Society*, London 1974, pp. 210-49.

⁴ Dimitris Kyratas, *The Social Structure of the Early Christian Communities*, London 1987, Verso £24.95.

religion of an oppressed class, and particularly of slaves. Kyrtatas draws attention to important distinctions which church historians have in general overlooked, such as that between urban and rural slaves, and between slaves of private individuals and those belonging to the imperial household. There is no reliable evidence, he observes, for Christianity among rural slaves, and in any case the conditions in which they lived virtually precluded independent religious activities. Christian slaves of private owners belonged generally to the limited group who enjoyed close contact with and the confidence of their masters, and consequently had some freedom to come and go as they pleased. They seem usually to have belonged to Christian masters, and may well have been converted along with them. Slaves of other categories generally did not have the personal freedom which would enable them to take part in the life of a Christian community. Furthermore the idea that early—or indeed later—Christianity had an abolitionist attitude towards slavery is swiftly and clearly refuted. It is a product of nineteenth-century European and American thought. Kyrtatas notes the interesting point that although early Christian writers often discuss sexual behaviour in great detail, none of them mention the widespread sexual exploitation of slaves.

Imperial slaves and imperial freedmen are another matter. Freedmen of Caesar are mentioned as Christians in the Pauline epistles. Kyrtatas enlarges the scope of the investigation to cover the *familia Caesaris*, both slaves and freedmen, up to the fourth century. He argues that the conversion of members of this group, with their strong esprit de corps, their mobility, and their access to higher levels of society made a more important contribution to the spread of Christianity than is generally realized. He suggests that their status inconsistency may have predisposed them to favour a religion which offered them not only salvation in the next world, but acceptance in a close-knit and egalitarian group in this world. Lane Fox, incidentally, finds the concept of status inconsistency irrelevant and unhelpful. The historian and the sociologist sometimes engage in a dialogue of the deaf.

The second question to which Kyrtatas addresses himself is how, if at all, Christianity spread from the city to the countryside. His suggestion that the 'subversive' tone of Palestinian Christianity may have survived or been revived in later rural Christian communities is interesting, but hard to prove or disprove. Most of the evidence which he examines comes from Egypt, not the most typical province of the Roman empire. It is true that in the Arsinoite region in the mid-third century some villagers took the Scriptures literally and expected the kingdom of Heaven to be realized—and in a very material way—on earth, while the Alexandrian hierarchy allegorized and spiritualized everything. Was this a throw-back to Galilean ideology? Maybe, though Gnostic influence seems a more likely explanation of the Villagers' attitude. But what is more important is surely that bishop Dionysius went down from Alexandria to Arsinoe, talked to them for days on end, and eventually convinced the majority that they were wrong. The organization of the church enabled it to keep rural and urban Christians in step. In concentrating on Egypt, which offers the best-documented case, Kyrtatas may have missed an opportunity for a comparative study of rural evangelization. At the same time as Dionysius was arguing with

Egyptian peasants, Gregory the Wonder-Worker was preaching to backward farmers and herdsmen in the wild mountains of Pontus in north-east Asia Minor. Lane Fox recounts and analyses his activity in great detail, though without some of the conceptual sharpness which Kyrtatas brings to his study of rural Egypt.

Both authors are in substantial agreement that there was little evangelization of the countryside before the second century, and that when it did come it was through contacts between the more educated—which meant in some regions the more Hellenized—countrymen and the clergy of the urban church. But there is much that we still either do not know or do not understand.

Both also agree that Christians were still a tiny minority of Roman society by 312. Five per cent is accepted by both as a maximum estimate, and it was very unevenly distributed. Public preaching to the heathen played scarcely any part in the spread of Christianity in post-Apostolic times, miracles were commoner in apocryphal narratives than Christian tradition suggests. The new religion spread mostly by person-to-person contact, either within self-conscious groups like the *familia Caesaris* or in urban neighbourhoods where everyone knew, or thought they knew, what everyone else was up to. Instantaneous mass conversions are recorded, though rarely by reliable eyewitnesses, but we do not know how many lasted through the long process of catechization and became full members of a Christian community. Few Christians belonged to the aristocracy, who were protected by social and educational barriers. Not many were even city councillors. Most Christians were artisans, shop-keepers, minor officials.

What made Christianity 'take off' was Constantine's public espousal, support and patronage, followed by that of his successors, Julian excepted. Within a century Christianity provided the dominant ideology of Roman society and had taken over much of the classicizing culture of the upper classes, who now began to rally to the new religion and indeed to provide many of its leading personalities. Is this an example of the role of the contingent in history, the 'Cleopatra's nose' syndrome? Perhaps. But the books of Lane Fox and Kyrtatas suggest that there were features of Christianity that fitted it for ideological hegemony—its tight organization, discipline and mutual support system, its offer of a 'fresh start' in a world in which old self-regulating social mechanisms were beginning to break down, its promise of life after death, its historical character, with a beginning in time and the prospect of a victorious end in time, its institutionalized access to a supreme power, and the scope which it offered to over-achievers. Many traditional religions offered some of these, none offered them all. The argument will go on. In the meantime Lane Fox and Kyrtatas have made significant and highly readable contributions to it.

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The Dialectic of Reform

Armen Aganbegyan

The Soviet Economic Crisis

Benedict Anderson

Manila's Cacique Democracy

Ernest Mandel

The Perils of Marketization

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The mid to late eighties have seen the retreat or overturn of a string of Third World military regimes in Latin America and South East Asia. The ejection of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines followed a profound popular mobilization and partly reflected the challenge of a protracted insurgency. Yet, as Ben Anderson shows in a highly illuminating and accomplished essay on Filipino political culture and history, there are underlying patterns of class formation and political rule which have persisted through the vicissitudes of the twentieth-century Philippines. Not only have recent elections been a triumph for the downgrading and mercantile elite which emerged belatedly in the colonial epoch, but its characteristic techniques of political control and patronage have survived Marcos as they did Japanese occupation in the forties. The political formula of 'cacique democracy' which now largely frustrates the hopes aroused by the overthrow of Marcos derives from the local power of a well-entrenched oligarchy as well as from a central state machine which remains intact. Anderson shows how Filipino notables learnt to manipulate electoral politics during the period of US colonial rule and etches a portrait of Marcos as Super Cacique. In future issues we will be following up Ben Anderson's article with studies of the role of the Filipino military and of the experience of other Third World capitalist states in the throes of democratic revolution.

In NLR 164 Boris Kagarlitsky, one of the organizers of Moscow's recently formed Federation of Socialist Clubs, assessed the impact of 'glasnost' on Soviet cultural life. In a new essay, also appearing here for the first time, Kagarlitsky traces the dramatic dialectic of change opened up by 'perestroika' and compares it with the bureaucratic stagnation of the Brezhnev era. In the discussion preceding the Special Conference of the CPSU calls have been made in the Soviet press for the legalization of independent groups and for pluralistic guarantees and democratic procedures in the functioning of leading bodies of the party and state. Kagarlitsky argues that genuine democratization must include a revival of socialist initiative throughout civil society if the deep-seated structures of bureaucratic stagnation are to be swept away. In this issue we also publish a paper by the leading Soviet economist Abel Aganbegyan in which he explains the acute impasse in the Soviet economy and outlines the economic programme of 'perestroika'.

The boldness of some of the political proposals made by Gorbachev and his supporters reflects the urgent pressures exerted by the failure of the Soviet model of a bureaucratically centralized economy. In further critique of the 'market socialist' model which has been explored by Alec Nove in his book 'The Economics of Feasible Socialism', and in contributions to NLR 119 and NLR 161, Ernest Mandel warns of the dangers of thoroughgoing marketization and defends the case for a articulated system of self-managing enterprises, based on democratic planning, which he first advanced in NLR 159. Evidently debate on these issues is of fundamental importance for the future of socialism and will be continued in the pages of the Review.

In NLR 163 Norman Geras criticized the account of Marxism given in the recent work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In a further contribution he now provides a comprehensive rejoinder to their response in NLR 166, 'Post-Marxism without Apologies'. While seeing no merit in the methodology or Marx-critique proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, Geras argues that Marxism must be open to rational and fair minded criticism in debating the many substantive issues of importance to the socialist movement today.

The cultural impact of left intellectuals in the United States has recently been subjected to sharp attack in two books written from quite opposite standpoints. The neo-conservative Allan Bloom has, in a shrill and shallow polemic, denounced the supposedly widespread and nefarious influence of radicals; Russell Jacoby, a left critic who laments the passing of a generation of radical 'public intellectuals', has entered a more disturbing indictment of new left academics for having retreated from the arena of public controversy to the picayune and comfortable preoccupations of campus life. In a vigorous and informative response Lynn Garafola points out that a new generation of radical writers and artists, finding their contributions unwelcome in established journals and reviews, have helped to create a diverse and critical intelligentsia which no longer defines itself through the pronouncements of a few well-known pundits.

Finally we publish a comment by Alex Callinicos on Perry Anderson's essay on Britain's historical trajectory in NLR 161.

Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams

About this time last year, President Corazon Aquino told a most instructive lie. Addressing the Filipino-Chinese Federated Chambers of Commerce on 9 March 1987, she described her appearance before them as a 'home-coming,' since her great-grandfather had been a poor immigrant from south-east China's Fukien province.¹ Doubtless her desperate need—given the Philippines' near-bankrupt economy and \$28 billion external debt²—to inspire feelings of solidarity and confidence among a powerful segment of Manila's business class made some embroidery understandable. But the truth is that the President, born Corazon Cojuangco, is a member of one of the wealthiest and most powerful dynasties within the Filipino oligarchy. Her grandfather, putative son of the penniless immigrant, was Don Melecio Cojuangco, born in Malolos, Central Luzon in 1871. A graduate of the Dominicans' Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the Escuela Normal, and a prominent *agricultor* (i.e. hacendado) in the province of Tarlac, he was, in 1907, at the age of 36, elected to the Philippine Assembly, the quasi-legislature established by the

American imperialists in that year.³ One of his sons (Corazon's uncle) became Governor of Tarlac in 1941, another (her father, Don José) its most prominent Congressman. In 1967, one of his grandsons (her cousin), Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco, became Governor of Tarlac with Ferdinand Marcos's backing, and went on to count among the most notorious of the Marcos cronies. Another grandson (her younger brother), José 'Peping' Cojuangco, was in those days one of Tarlac's Congressmen, and is today again a Congressman—and one of the half-dozen most powerful politicians in the country. Her marriage to Benigno Aquino, Jr., at various periods Governor of Tarlac and Senator, linked her to another key dynasty of Central Luzon. Benigno Aquino, Sr., had been a Senator in the late American era and won lasting notoriety for his active collaboration with the Japanese Occupation regime. At the present time, one of her brothers-in-law, Agapito 'Butz' Aquino, is a Senator, and another, Paul, the head of Lakas ng Bansa (one of the three main 'parties' in her electoral coalition); an uncle-in-law, Herminio Aquino, is a Congressman, as are Emigdio 'Ding' Tanjuatco (cousin), and Teresa Aquino-Oreta (sister-in-law).⁴ A maternal uncle, Francisco 'Komong' Sumulong, is majority floor-leader of the House of Representatives. Nor was Corazon herself, on becoming President, quite the simple housewife of her election broadsheets. For thirteen years she had served as treasurer of the Cojuangco family holding company, which controls a vast financial, agricultural, and urban real estate empire.⁵

Yet there is a core of truth in President Aquino's claims of 9 March 1987 and this core offers a useful guide to understanding the peculiarities of modern Philippine politics. The '-co' suffix to her maiden name is shared by a significant number of other dynasties within the national oligarchy: Quenco, Tanjuatco, Tiangco, Chioco, etc. It originates from the Hokkienese *k'o*, a term of respect for older males; and it shows that her family originated among the Chinese mestizos who bloomed economically under the Spanish colonial regime and consolidated their wealth with political power under the Americans.⁶ It is the dominance of this group which decisively marks off the Philippines from Spanish America (mestizos frequently in power, but not Chinese mestizos) and the rest of Southeast Asia (Chinese mestizos, indeed any mestizos, removed from political power, with the ambiguous exception of Siam). How did this happen?

³ *Philippine Star Weekly*, 8–14 March 1987.

⁴ In July 1987 she estimated that debt payments would consume 40 per cent of government revenues, and 27 per cent of all export earnings for the following six years. The economic growth rate in 1986 was 0.13 per cent. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 July 1987.

⁵ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 12 February 1987; and information kindly supplied by Philippine historian Michael Cullins. He ran as a candidate of the Progressives, the most openly American-collaborationist of the parties of that era. The above article implausibly suggests that Melecio's grandfather, a certain 'Martin' Cojuangco, was the real immigrant founder of the dynasty.

⁶ Emigdio is secretary-general of the Lakas ng Bansa. José 'Peping' Cojuangco is chairman of another main coalition component, the PDP-Laban.

⁷ *Time*, 5 January 1987.

⁸ On this strand the *locus classicus* remains Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898*, New Haven 1965.

Spanish Colonialism, the Church and the Mestizo Elite

By the time the Spanish arrived to conquer, in the 1560s, the empire of Felipe II had reached its peak, and the islands, named after him, were the last major imperial acquisition. Iberian energies were absorbed in Europe and the Americas. The few Spaniards who did travel on to the Philippines found little on the spot to satiate their avarice. The one substantial source of rapid wealth lay not in mines but in commerce with Imperial China. Manila quickly became the entrepôt for the 'galleon trade', by which Chinese silks and porcelains were exchanged for Mexican silver, to be resold, at colossal profit, across the Pacific and eventually in Europe. It was not a business that required much acumen or industry; one needed merely to be in Manila, to have the right political connections, and to work out relationships with the Chinese traders and artisans who flocked to the entrepôt.⁷

The absence of mines, and, until much later, of hacienda-based commercial agriculture, meant not only a concentration of the Spanish in the Manila area, but the lack of any sustained interest in massive exploitation of the indigenous (or imported) populations as a labour force. At the same time, the fact that the pre-Hispanic Philippines (in contrast to Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Vietnam or Java) lacked any states with substantial military or bureaucratic power meant that relatively little force was required for the initial conquest and for its subsequent consolidation. Small garrisons, scattered here and there, generally sufficed.⁸ Hence, *in the provinces*, to a degree unparalleled anywhere in the Americas except Paraguay, Spanish power in the Philippines was mediated through the Church.

The ardently Counter-Reformation clerics were fortunate in finding the great bulk of the indigenous population to be 'animists'. Buddhism and Hinduism had not reached so far. And though Islam was sweeping in from what today is Indonesia, it had consolidated itself only in parts of Mindanao and adjacent southern islands. There it could be contained, if never subdued.⁹ Meanwhile a vast proselytization was launched

⁷ On the galleon trade, see William L. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, reprint edition, New York 1939. Furthermore, responding to pressure from enlightened clerics and officials appalled by the savage extortions of the settlers in the Americas, Madrid attempted to make amends in the Philippines by (fitfully) banning the residence of private Spaniards in the provinces.

⁸ There is a sizeable literature on the Spanish Philippines, but see especially, James L. Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Acts and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700*, Madison 1959; Nicholas P. Cushman, *Spain in the Philippines: From Conquest to Revolution*, Quezon City 1971; Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Remitted*, Quezon City 1975, Parts 1 and 2; and the many impressive essays in Alfred W. McCoy and Ed C. de Jesus, eds., *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, Quezon City 1982.

⁹ Drawing on their experiences in the Iberian peninsula, the Spaniards termed these Southeast Asian Muslims 'Moors' ('Moros'). The name has, after four centuries, stuck. Those Muslims today seeking independence from the Philippines are loosely united in what they call the Moro National Liberation Front. The ghost of Felipe II must be amused.

The best historical-anthropological sources on the 'Moros' are: P.G. Gowing, *Muslim-Filipino: Heritage and Heritage*, Quezon City 1979; Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, Quezon City 1973, and his *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines*, Berkeley 1985, and T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics*, Oxford 1980. Important monographs on two of the major ethno-linguistic groups within the Moro People are Thomas Klefer, *The Tausug: Violence and Law in a Philippine Muslim Society*, New York 1972, and Reynaldo Clemente Ilet, *Magindanos, 1860-1888: the Career of Dato Uts of Bangsan*, Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program Data Paper no. 32, 1971.

which has resulted in the contemporary Philippines being 90 per cent Christian.¹⁰ (Only in twentieth-century Korea has Christianization in Asia been comparably successful.) The most noteworthy feature of this campaign was that it was conducted, most arduously, not through the medium of Spanish, but through the dozens of local languages. Till the very end of the Spanish regime no more than 5 per cent of the local population had any facility with the colonial language. Spanish never became a pervasive lingua franca, as it did in the Americas, with the result that, certainly in 1900, and to a lesser extent even today, the peasants and fishermen in different parts of the archipelago could not communicate with one another: only their rulers had a common archipelago-wide speech.

Two other features of clerical dominion had lasting consequences for the evolution of Philippine social structure. On the one hand, the quarrelling Orders, parcelled among out the various islands by Felipe II in the sixteenth century, pioneered commercial agriculture in the later eighteenth century, at the prodding of Carlos III's last, enlightened governor, José Basco y Vargas (1777-87). It was they who built what, in effect, were the first great haciendas. But these 'conglomerates' remained institutional, rather than family (dynastic) property. The friars might liberally father children on local women, but they could not marry the women, or bequeath property to the progeny. In due course, the conquering Americans would dispossess the friars of their lands, as the eighteenth-century Bourbons had dispossessed the Jesuits; and these lands would fall like ripe mangoes into the hands of the likes of President Aquino's immediate ancestors.¹¹ The Philippines thus never had a substantial *criollo* hacendado class.

On the other hand, the Church, at least in its early days, had serious dreams of Christianizing the Celestial Empire. From the start it set eagerly to converting those whom the Spanish generally referred to as *sangleys*.¹² Usually unlucky with the itinerant fathers, they were spectacularly successful with the children fathered on local mothers. Spanish colonial law helped by assigning these children a distinct juridical status as mestizos (in due course the word meant, typically, not the offspring of Spaniards and 'natives', but of Chinese and local women). Christianized through their mothers, organized in their own guilds (*gremios*), compelled to avoid political transvestitism by wearing a distinctive costume and coiffure, these children, and their in-marrying further descendants, came to form a distinct stratum of colonial society.

¹⁰ The standard work is Honório de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1764*, Cambridge 1961. But see also Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Studies in Philippine Church History*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1969, and the brilliantly iconoclastic text of Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1988.

¹¹ In the provincial environs of Manila alone, the clerics had accumulated, by the end of the nineteenth century, over 50,000 acres of land. The basic text on these developments is Dennis Morrow Roth, *The Friar Estate of the Philippines*, Albuquerque 1977.

¹² From the Ho-kienese *sangle*, meaning 'trader'. It is a lesson for our nationalistic age that neither the Spaniards nor the Hokkienese could yet imagine 'Chinese'. In this regard, they lagged far behind Amsterdam's United East India Company, the giant transnational of the seventeenth century, which devoted intercessional, juridical, and 'sumptuary' effort to forcing targeted groups under its power to realize that they were, after all, *Chinese*.

In some cases, perhaps only the 'co' suffix to their names betrayed distant celestial origins.

They might, however, have remained a marginal and stigmatized group, had it not been for the services of British imperialism. When Madrid joined in the Seven Years' War, London responded, *inter alia*, by occupying Manila in 1762 and holding it for the next two years. The local *sangleys*, frequent victims of Iberian extortion and contempt, rallied to the invaders, who, when they retired, insouciantly left these humble allies to the vengeful mercies of their erstwhile oppressors. Most were then expelled from the Philippines, and further immigration was legally barred for almost a century. Into the vacuum created by the expulsions came the mestizos, who took over much of local trade, and began, following the friars' example, to move into small-scale latifundism.¹³

But they were, world-historically, several generations behind their ladino confrères in the Americas. Among them there were still no great rural magnates, no lawyers, few priests or prominent exporting merchants; above all there was no intelligentsia. The Church, characteristically reactionary, controlled printing and what miserable travesty of educational institutions existed. Hence the great nationalist upheaval that rocked the Americas between 1810 and 1840 had no counterpart in the archipelago until the 1880s.

The nineteenth century, nonetheless, was kind to the mestizos. One might have expected Spaniards to flock there after the loss of the Americas. But the last galleon had sailed in 1811. Spain itself was racked with ceaseless conflict. And Cuba was so much closer, so infinitely richer. New people arrived, but the ones who mattered were not Spaniards but Anglo-Saxons (British and Americans) and, once again, *sangleys*, by now of course 'Chinese'. In 1834 Manila was fully opened to international trade, and Cebu City and other smaller ports followed in due course; the ban on Chinese immigration was abolished. Chinese discipline, austerity, and energy quickly drove the mestizos out of inter-island trade and small-scale urban business. On the other hand, the internationalization of the economy after 1834 offered the mestizos—now a quarter of a million strong in a four million population—new opportunities in the countryside, in combination with British and American trading houses. These businesses saw the possibilities in full-scale commercialization of Philippine agriculture, and thus provided the necessary capital and commercial outlets to permit the mestizos to become, for the first time, real hacendados.

Nothing better illustrates this interplay between Anglo-Saxons, mestizos and Chinese than the modern history of the island of Negros, today the 'sugar island' par excellence of the Philippines. Almost uninhabited when British interests set up the first sugar mill there in 1857, the island's population had increased almost tenfold by the end of the

¹³ The account in this and the following paragraphs is summarised from Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life*.

century, and 274 steam mills were in operation.¹⁴ If the British supplied capital, transoceanic transport, and markets, it was mestizos from Panay and Cebu, threatened by the Chinese influx into the port-cities of Cebu City and Iloilo, who managed the transfer of the peasant labour needed to grow and process cane. In no time at all, these frontier capitalists turned themselves, on the Spanish model, into 'feudal' hacendados in the *monarca's* *riche* grand style. Thus, in the summer of 1987, when talk of land reform was in the Manila air, Congresswoman Hortensia Starke, one of the great sugar planters of Western Negros, could tell the newspaper: 'Your land is like your most beautiful dress, the one that gives you good luck. If someone takes it from you, he only wants to destabilize you, to undress you.'¹⁵

The Growth of National Sentiment

The next step was to get educated. A serious education was not easy to acquire in the colony, where the Church was violently opposed to any inroads of liberalism from Madrid and controlled most local schools. But the mestizos' growing wealth, the internationalization of the economy, and the steamship combined to make it possible for a number of young mestizo males to study in Europe. Quickly termed *ilustrados* (enlightened ones), they created during the 1880s the colony's first real intelligentsia, and began a cultural assault on benighted clericalism and, later, on Spanish political domination.¹⁶ No less significant was the fact that, going to the same schools, reading the same books, writing for the same journals, and marrying each other's sisters and cousins, they inaugurated the self-conscious consolidation of a pan-Philippine (except for the Moro areas) mestizo stratum, where their elders had formed dispersed clusters of provincial caciques. It was these people who, at the very end of the century, began calling themselves 'Filipinos', a term which up till then had designated only Spanish creoles.¹⁷

Wealthy and educated they might now be, but they had no political power. Late nineteenth-century Spain was too feeble economically and too divided politically to cope intelligently with rising mestizo demands. Repression was the order of the day, culminating in the execution in 1896 of the brilliant mestizo polymath José Rizal, whose two great, banned novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, mercilessly satiri-

¹⁴ See David Steinberg, 'Tradition and Response' in John Brennan, ed., *The Marcos Era and Beyond*, Princeton 1986, p. 44. This text also contains important essays by Wilfredo Arce and Ricardo Abad on 'The Social Situation,' and by Bernardo Villegas on 'The Economic Crisis.'

¹⁵ *The Manila Chronicle*, 19 July 1987. She went on 'To give up the land is to go against everything you have been taught as a child. It is like changing your religion.' Another Dragon Lady, coconut hacienda Congresswoman Maria Clara Lobregat, wailed 'The land has been there for years and years, and you develop some attachment to it. It's like you have a house with many rooms and you are asked to share the rooms with others.'

¹⁶ See especially Horacio de la Costa, *The Background of Nationalism and Other Essays*, Manila 1965; John N. Schurzacher, *The Propaganda Movement: 1880-1895*, Manila 1973; Cesar Adib Majul, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, Quezon City 1967; and Renato Constantino, *Insight and Foresight*, Quezon City 1977.

¹⁷ These people included, at the non-European-educated edge, Don Melecio Cojuangco.

zed, in Spanish, clerical reaction, secular misrule, and the frequent opportunism and greed of his own class.¹⁸

Yet, not unsurprisingly, the inevitable insurrection did not originate with the *ilustrados*. In 1892, Andrés Bonifacio, an impoverished autodidact from the Manila artisanate, formed a secret revolutionary society with the mellifluous Tagalog name of *Kataastaasang Kagalangalang na Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* (The Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Sons of the People—Katipunan for short), after the Masonic model.¹⁹ The Katipunan's title already implied its reach and limitations. The use of Tagalog, rather than a Spanish understood only by a tiny elite, showed Bonifacio's intention of appealing to, and mobilizing, the *indio* masses. On the other hand, in those days Tagalog was spoken only by the masses of Central and Southern Luzon, and was incomprehensible in Mindanao, the Visayas, and even Ilocano-speaking northwestern Luzon.²⁰ In August 1896, Bonifacio launched an ill-prepared insurrection in Manila, which was quickly suppressed, but the movement spread rapidly in the surrounding provinces, where leadership was increasingly taken over by youthful mestizos.²¹ Preoccupied by the revolutionary movement that had broken out in Cuba in February 1895, the Spanish fairly quickly gave up the struggle. In 1899, a Republic of the Philippines was proclaimed under the leadership of 'General' Emilio Aguinaldo, a youthful caudillo from the province of Cavite (who had had Bonifacio judicially murdered in 1897).²²

It was, however, a fragile Republic, with more than a few similarities to Bolívar's abortive Gran Colombia. It had no purchase on the Muslim southwest; parts of the Visayas seemed likely to go their own independent way; and even in Luzon mestizo leadership was contested by a variety of religious visionaries and peasant populists carrying on the tradition of Bonifacio's radicalism.²³ Moreover, the mestizo generals themselves (who included the grandfathers of both Ferdinand Marcos and Benigno Aquino, Jr.) began to follow the pattern of their American forebears, by setting themselves up as independent caudillos. Had it not been for William McKinley, one might almost say, the Philippines in

¹⁸ Several English-language translations of these novels exist, the most recent by Leon Ma. Guerrero *The Last Eden*, Bloomington 1961, and *El Filibusterismo* (*Subversion*), London 1965.

¹⁹ The standard nationalist texts on the Katipunan and the revolution it initiated are Teodoro A. Agoncillo's *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, Quezon City 1956, and *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*, Quezon City 1960. Agoncillo's theses are undermined by Reynaldo Clemente Nieto's masterly *Payson and Revolution. Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1898-1918*, Quezon City 1979, which is unquestionably the most profound and searching book on late nineteenth-century Philippine history. See also T.M. Kalaw, *The Philippine Revolution*, Kawilhan, Mandatuyong, Rizal 1969.

²⁰ As late as 1960, fifteen years after American-style independence, and thirty years after it had been decided to promote Tagalog as an official, national lingua franca, less than 45 per cent of the population understood the language—marginally more than the 40 per cent claiming to understand English. See the 1960 census data cited in Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Philippines*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1965, p. 77.

²¹ See Milagros C. Guerrero, 'The Provincial and Municipal Elites of Luzon during the Revolution, 1898-1902', in McCoy and de Jesus, eds., *Philippine Social History*, pp. 155-190, and Nick Joaquín, *The Agony of Tarsas: An Essay on History as Three Generations*, unexpurgated version, Manila 1986, Part One.

²² Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Writings and Trial of Andrés Bonifacio*, Manila 1963, contains most of the relevant documents in Tagalog and in English translation.

²³ See Nieto's often heart-rending account in *Payson and Revolution*.

the early twentieth century could have fractured into three weak, caudillo-ridden states with the internal politics of nineteenth-century Venezuela or Ecuador.

But the McKinley Administration, egged on by William Randolph Hearst, went to war with Spain in April 1898, claiming sympathy with Filipino (and Cuban) revolutionaries. A week later Admiral Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay; and by the Treaty of Paris signed in December, the Philippines were ceded to the Americans. From that point 'pacification' replaced 'sympathy'. By 1901 Aguinaldo had surrendered, with most other caciques following suit, though peasant resistance continued in some areas until 1910.

US Colonization and the National Oligarchy

The American colonization changed everything.²⁴ In the first place, it ensured the political unification of the archipelago by smashing, often with great brutality, all opposition.²⁵ Even the Muslim areas, which Spain had never wholly subdued, were fully subjected to Manila, thereby probably being their last chance at sovereign independence. Secondly, it vastly improved the economic position of the mestizos. The American regime decided to expropriate much (about 400,000 acres) of the rich agricultural land hitherto held by the Orders, and to put it up for public

²⁴ The contrasting fates of the contemporary anticolonial movements in Cuba and the Philippines are instructive. In Cuba, American imperialism, claiming to side with the revolutionaries, ousted the Spaniards, established its own military rule for four years, and then installed a quasi-independent Republic, which, however, came under its full economic control. The island had far less strategic than pecuniary value. With the Philippines it was largely the other way round. Washington's strategists, giddy at their navy's first imperial circumnavigation of the globe, saw in the superb harbour of Manila Bay a perfect trans-Pacific 'coaling-station' and jumping-off point for the penetration of China and the outflanking of Japan. These 'bases' could only be secured—not least from rival imperialist powers—by political means, i.e. colonization. Ever since, American relations with the Philippines have ultimately centred on military considerations. A succinct account of the thinking behind the American intervention can be found in William J. Pomeroy, *American Neo-colonialism: Its Emergence in the Philippines and Asia*, New York 1970, chapters 1–2. In 1897, Captain Alfred Mahan had been appointed to McKinley's Naval Advisory Board, from which he peddled his imperial sea-power theories to substantial effect.

There is a vast literature on the American era. The classical text is Joseph Ralston Hayden, *The Philippines—A Study in National Development*, New York 1942. Peter W. Stanley's penetrating and highly entertaining *A Nation in the Making. The Philippines and the United States, 1899–1921*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1974 and the later volume he edited, *Reappraising our Empire. New Perspectives on Philippine-American History*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1984 are the best modern guides. See also Norman G. Owen, ed., *Comparative Colonialism: Studies on the Philippines under American Rule*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia No. 3, 1971, and Theodore Friend's unintentionally revealing *Between Two Empires. The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1926–1946*, New Haven 1965. A useful recent text is Daniel B. Schurmer and Stephen R. Shalom, *The Philippines Reader. A History of Colonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, Boston 1987, chapters 1–2.

²⁵ See Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, London 1960, and Russell Roth, *Muddy Glory: America's 'Indian Wars' in the Philippines, 1899–1933*, West Haven, Conn. 1981. The newly-baptized 'Filipinos' put up a stout resistance. The repression cost at least 5,000 American lives and 600,000,000 still-golden dollars. Probably the high price, and the 'Indian-hunter' mentality of the troops dispatched, accounts for the savagery of the Americans. The killed-to-wounded ratio among Filipinos was 5 to 1. At least 20,000 died in action, and a further 200,000 from war-related famine and pestilence. General 'Jake' Smith, assigned to pacify recalcitrant Samar, told his men 'I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn, the more you burn and kill the better it will please me.' Samar was to be turned into 'a howling wilderness.' To the Fairfield, Maine, *Journal*, Sergeant Howard McFarlane of the 43rd Infantry wrote 'On Thursday, March 29, [1900] eighteen of my company killed seventy-five nigger bolomen and ten of the nigger gunners. . . . When we find one that is not dead, we have bayonets.' Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, op. 360 and 305.

auction. The mestizos, well-off hacendados even in late Spanish times, were the group with the money and the interest to take advantage of this opportunity, and most of the former ecclesiastical property fell into their hands. Still more important, after 1909, by the terms of the Payne-Aldrich Act, the Philippines were enclosed within the American tariff wall, so that their agricultural exports had easy, untaxed access to the world's largest national market—where, in addition, prices, especially for sugar, were often well above world norms.

But it was above all the political innovations of the Americans that created a solid, visible 'national oligarchy'. The key institutional change was the stage-by-stage creation of a Congress-style bicameral legislature, based, in the lower house at least, on single-district, winner-take-all elections.²⁶ The new representational system proved perfectly adapted to the ambitions and social geography of the mestizo *monstruoso* *riches*. Their economic base lay in hacienda agriculture, not in the capital city. And their provincial fiefdoms were also protected by the country's immense linguistic diversity. They might all speak the elite, 'national' language (Spanish, later American), but they also spoke variously Tagalog, Ilocano, Pampango, Cebuano, Ilongo, and a dozen other tongues. In this way competition in any given electoral district was effectively limited, in a pre-television age, to a handful of rival local caciques. But Congress, which thus offered them guaranteed access to national-level political power, also brought them together in the capital on a regular basis. There, more than at any previous time, they got to know one another well in a civilized 'ring' sternly refereed by the Americans. They might dislike one another, but they went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other's wives, and arranged marriages between each other's children. They were for the first time forming a self-conscious *ruling class*.²⁷

The timing of American colonization also had a profound formative influence on the emerging oligarchy and its style of rule. The America of 1900–1930 was the America of Woodrow Wilson's lamented 'congressional government'. The metropole had no powerful centralized professional bureaucracy; office was still heavily a matter of political patronage; corrupt urban machines and venal court-house rural cliques were still pervasive; and the authority of presidents, except in time of war, was still restricted. Hence, unlike all the other modern colonial regimes in twentieth-century Southeast Asia, which operated through huge, autocratic, white-run bureaucracies, the American authorities in Manila, once assured of the mestizos' self-interested loyalty to the motherland, created only a minimal civil service, and quickly turned over most of its component positions to the natives. In 1903, Filipinos held just under half of the 5,500 or so positions in this civil service. By the end of the 'Filipinizing' governor-generalship of (Democrat) Francis Harrison in 1921, the proportion had risen to 90 per cent (out of a mere 14,000 jobs); and by the mid-thirties Americans held only 1 per cent of

²⁶ But with a highly restricted, property-based franchise. Even on the eve of World War II, only about 14 per cent of the potential electorate was permitted to vote.

²⁷ One gets a nice close-up feel for this change in Joaquín's *The Agony of Tarlac*, pp. 155–98.

civilian bureaucratic posts, most of them in the educational field.²⁸ (American power depended on military dominance and the tariff.) As in the United States, civil servants frequently owed their employment to legislator patrons, and up to the end of the American era the civilian machinery of state remained weak and divided.

The new oligarchs quickly understood how the Congressional system could serve to increase their power. As early as Harrison's time, the American acquiesced in the plundering of the Central Bank of the Philippines. House Speaker Sergio Osmeña, Sr., and his friends helped themselves to huge, virtually free loans for financing the construction of sugar centrals, and cheerfully ignored the subsequent bankrupting of the bank of issue. In a more general sense, Congressional control of the purse, and of senior judicial appointments, taught the oligarchy that the 'rule of law', provided it made and managed this law, was the firmest *general* guarantee of its property and political hegemony. (As we shall see, it was Marcos's suspension of the 'rule of law' that aroused the alarm and hostility of significant portions of the oligarchy in the 1970s and early 1980s.)

One final feature of the American political system is worth emphasizing: the huge proliferation of provincial and local elective offices—in the absence of an autocratic territorial bureaucracy. From very early on mestizo caciques understood that these offices, in the right hands, could consolidate their local political fiefdoms. Not unexpectedly, the right hands were those of family and friends. Brothers, uncles, and cousins for the senior posts, sons and nephews for the junior ones.²⁹ Here is the origin of the 'political dynasties'—among them the Aquinos and Cojuangcos—which make Filipino politics so spectacularly different from those of any other country in Southeast Asia.

Those were palmy days. But after 1930 the clouds began to gather. As the Depression struck the United States, Washington came under increasing pressure from trade unions and farm organizations (who opposed the influx of Filipino labour and agricultural products) to impose independence on the colony. Though the caciques could not decently say so in public, independence was the last thing they desired, precisely because it threatened the source of their huge wealth: access to the American market. Besides, they had now switched from Spanish to English, and their children were going to school in Manhattan and Boston. And they lacked the monarchical residues which, suitably transformed, underpinned the imagined 'national traditions' of Khmer, Burmese, and Indonesians: the mestizos had no Angkor, Pagan, or Borobudur at their service. It was thus with real reluctance that in 1935

²⁸ See Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *A Short History of the Philippines*, New York 1969, p. 169, and David Wurfel, 'The Philippines', in George McT. Kahin, ed., *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*, second edition, Ithaca: N.Y. 1964, pp. 679-777, 689-90.

Next door, in the Dutch East Indies, the colonial state of the 1930s had about 150,000 officials on its payroll, 90 per cent of them 'natives'. See my 'Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XLII, 3 May 1983, p. 480.

²⁹ Such policies did not always guarantee harmony. Members of these cacique dynasties frequently quarrelled and competed with each other in local elections. But it can safely be said that an oligarchy is truly in place when rulers and opposition leaders, ins and outs, both come from the same families.

they accepted Commonwealth status. The one evident plus was the initiation of a Filipino chief executive. The urbane, rascally mestizo, Manuel Quezon, became Commonwealth president.³⁰

The Japanese Occupation and After

Six years later, in December 1941, the armies of Imperial Japan struck south. In a matter of weeks most of the Americans were sent packing, including General Douglas MacArthur, who carted President Quezon and Vice-President Osmeña along with him.³¹ The rest of the oligarchy (one or two celebrated exceptions aside) hustled to collaborate with the invaders. Among the most prominent of these collaborators were Corazon Aquino's father-in-law (who became Speaker of the Occupation Assembly and Director-General of the pro-Japanese 'mass organization' Kalibapi) and the father of her Vice-President (Don José Laurel, Sr., who in 1943 became President of the puppet republic then inaugurated by Tokyo).³²

But collaboration could do nothing to save the hacienda-based export economy. Japan would permit no exports to America, and American bombers and warships ensured, after 1942, that few crops would reach Japan. The treasured 'rule of law' began to break down as anti-Japanese guerrilla bands, sometimes led by the small Socialist and Communist parties, expanded in the remoter rural areas, as inflation soared, and as Japanese exactions increased. Former tenants and landless labourers were emboldened to squat on hacienda lands and grow, not sugar, but crops needed for their everyday survival. Many refused now to pay the old brutal rents, and had the insolence to threaten the bailiffs who demanded them. Above all in the Central Luzon of the Cojuangcos and Aquinos, where rural poverty and exploitation were most acute, such peasants joined hands with the guerrillas in forming the Hukbalahap armies which harassed the Japanese and assassinated such collaborators as they could reach.³³ Unsurprisingly, many of the oligarchs abandoned

³⁰ See Friend, *Between Two Empires*, chapters 3-11, for an exhaustive account. The role of President Aquino's father-in-law is recounted in chatty detail in Joaquín's *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, chapters 3-5.

³¹ MacArthur had longstanding Philippine connections. His father, General Arthur MacArthur, had been second-in-command of the original American expeditionary force, and replaced his odious superior, General Elwell Otis, in May 1900. He stayed in power till 4 July 1901, when 'civilian rule' replaced that of the soldiers. The MacArthur family also had substantial business investments in the archipelago.

³² For some amusing glimpses of these stately ruffians at work, see chapter 5 of Renato and Letitia Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*, Quezon City 1978. The standard text on the Occupation remains David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II*, Ann Arbor 1967. But see also Hernando J. Abaya, *Betrayal in the Philippines*, New York 1946; and Alfred McCoy's essay in the volume he edited entitled *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation*, New Haven, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph Series No. 22, 1980.

³³ The classic text on the peasant resistance during the Japanese occupation, and its relationships with Socialist and Communist cadres, is Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, Berkeley 1977. See also Eduardo Lachica, *The Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt*, New York 1971; and 'Documents—The Peasant War in the Philippines', *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, XXIII, nos. 2-4, June-December 1958, pp. 375-436 (The documents, originally composed in 1946, offer valuable data on land concentration, peasant landlessness, tenancy rates, and exploitation of sharecroppers.) Note, in addition, the remarkable special issue of *Solidarity* (No. 102), 1985, devoted mainly to retrospective discussion of the Huk rebellion.

their haciendas to their unlucky bailiffs and retreated to Manila, where they turned their experienced hands to war-profiteering.³⁴

One might have expected the returning Americans to punish the oligarchs for their collaboration with the enemy. Senior officials in Washington indeed made noises to this effect. But the on-the-spot Liberator was, of course, MacArthur, who had close personal and business ties with the prewar oligarchy, and who, like Lyautey in Morocco, enjoyed playing lordly proconsul to native houseboys.³⁵ Quezon having meanwhile met his incautious Maker, MacArthur in 1946 arranged the election of his old mestizo friend (and prominent collaborator) Manuel Roxas as first president of the now sovereign Republic of the Philippines.³⁶

Roxas had only two years in power before he joined Quezon, but they were exceptionally productive years. An amnesty was arranged for all 'political prisoners' (mainly fellow-oligarchs held on charges of collaboration). In 1947, an agreement was signed permitting the US to retain control of its twenty-three (large and small) land, sea, and airbases for a further ninety-nine years (this was what, as in 1900, most mattered to Washington).³⁷ And the Constitution of 1935 was so amended as to give American citizens 'parity' access to the resources of the newly sovereign Republic (in return for which the oligarchy was granted continuing access, for a defined period, to the protected American market).³⁸ There was an additional bonus in this move, since it guaranteed activation for the Philippines of the Tydings Rehabilitation Act, which offered \$620,000,000 to those Americans and Filipinos who could demonstrate that they had lost a minimum of \$500 as a result of the war.³⁹ (Since the average annual per capita income of Filipinos was then a quarter of this sum, the major Filipino beneficiaries of Senator Tydings' generosity were the caciques.)

The next aim was to restore fully the pre-war agrarian and political order. For three basic reasons this goal proved difficult to achieve. First was the prize of independence itself: removal of the American ringmaster for domestic political competition, severe weakening of the state's

³⁴ See René B. Lojares, *The Man Who Would Be President: Sergio Osmeña and Philippine Politics*, Cebu 1986, for example. This excellent text shows how while father Sergio Osmeña, Sr., was serving in Washington as vice-president in exile, son Sergio Jr., was making money hand over fist supplying the Japanese occupation regime in Manila.

³⁵ See William Manchester's edifying *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964*, London 1979.

³⁶ Quezon died in the United States in 1944, and was succeeded, ad interim, by his vice-president Sergio Osmeña. Sr. MacArthur had no time for Osmeña, whom he regarded as old, tired, and too Spanish in personal style.

³⁷ Warfel, 'The Philippines', p. 761.

³⁸ Stuck with the Constitution's quorum requirements for amendments, Roxas found no way to achieve the necessary change except by disqualifying, on charges of terrorism and electoral fraud, those opposition Congressmen representing areas dominated by the Hukbalahap. See Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, pp. 150-51.

³⁹ See Friend, *Between Two Empires*, pp. 258-60.

capacity for centralized deployment of violence,⁴⁰ a fisc no longer externally guaranteed, and a war-ravaged and near-bankrupt economy. Second was the appearance, in Central Luzon at least, of an emboldened peasantry backed by armed Hukbalahap forces, which, denied access to constitutional participation by Roxas's manoeuvres, had little reason to make accommodations. Third was a rapid expansion of the suffrage that UN membership, in those innocent days, made it impossible to deny.

The Heyday of Cacique Democracy

Hence it was that in the last year of Roxas's life the Philippines saw the first conspicuous appearance of the country's now notorious 'private armies'. Drawn from lumpen elements in both Manila and the countryside, these armed gangs, financed by their hacendado masters, terrorized illegal squatters, peasant unions, and left-wing political leaders, with the aim of restoring uncontested cacique rule.⁴¹ The term 'warlord' entered the contemporary Filipino political vocabulary. Unsurprisingly, the new warlords found that their private armies were also highly functional for a now unrefereed electoral politics. The presidential elections of 1949, won by Roxas's vice-presidential successor Elpidio Quirino,⁴² were not merely corrupt in the pre-war style, but also extremely bloody and fraudulent: not so much because of central management, as because of the discrepancy between state power and cacique ambitions under conditions of popular suffrage and acute class antagonism.⁴³ (Characteristic of the time was what Nick Joaquín, the country's best-known writer, called the 'bloody fiefdom' of the Lacson dynasty in the sugar-planter paradise of Western Negros. Manila was virtually impotent vis-à-vis Governor Rafael Lacson's murderous 'special police' and 'civilian guards'.)⁴⁴

This was not what the Americans had bargained for. Besides, China had just been 'lost', Vietnam seemed likely to go the same way, and major Communist insurrections had broken out in neighbouring Malaya and Burma. Colonel Edward Lansdale was dispatched to restore order through the agency of Quirino's Secretary of Defence, Ramon Magasaysay, one of the few prominent politicians of the era who did not have cacique origins. Thanks to a mere million dollars in military and other

⁴⁰ The Philippine Army was still small, and 'second army' in character. In other words, it belonged to that army of mercenary forces, racially segmented, poorly armed and trained, and deployed for 'internal security' purposes, that we find throughout the late colonial world (After independence, some of their former MCOs—such as Idi Amin, Sengoulé Lamizana, Sékou, Jean-Baptiste Bokassa, etc.—became colonels and generals in an unhappy trice.) The contrast is with the 'first armies' of the industrial world, including that of the Soviet Union, which were self-armed, officered by military academy graduates, technologically sophisticated, amply financed, and capable of substantial external aggression.

⁴¹ More than anything else it was the ravages of the private armies that precipitated the open Hukbalahap insurrection against the state in 1948. See Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, chapter 5, for a fine account.

⁴² His defeated opponent was none other than fellow-oligarch Don José Laurel, Sr., president of the wartime puppet Republic.

⁴³ It is probably a general rule that *private* armies appear only under such conditions. The reappearance of these armies in President Aquino's presidency indicates the weakness of the state's army and a general social polarization.

⁴⁴ Proximate ancestors of today's so-called 'vigilantes'. See *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, pp. 221ff.

aid, the physical isolation of the Philippines, the restricted Luzon base of the Hukbalahap, and the errors of the Huk leaders themselves,⁴⁵ Lansdale prevailed. By 1954, the Huk rebellion had been crushed; thousands of impoverished Luzon peasants transmigrated to 'empty' Mindanao⁴⁶ (where they soon came into violent conflict with the local Muslims); and Magsaysay manoeuvred into the presidency.⁴⁷

The period 1954-1972 can be regarded as the full heyday of cacique democracy in the Philippines.⁴⁸ The oligarchy faced no serious domestic challenges. Access to the American market was declining as post-independence tariff barriers slowly rose, but this setback was compensated for by full access to the state's financial instrumentalities. Under the guise of promoting economic independence and import-substitution industrialization, exchange rates were manipulated, monopolistic licences parcelled out, huge, cheap, often unrepaid bank loans passed around, and the national budget frittered away in pork barrel legislation.⁴⁹ Some of the more enterprising dynasties diversified into urban real estate, hotels, utilities, insurance, the mass media, and so forth. The press, owned by rival cacique families, was famously free.⁵⁰ The reconsolidated, but decentralized, power of the oligarchy is nicely demonstrated by the fact that this press exposed every possible form of corruption and abuse of power (except for those of each paper's own proprietors, but, in the words of historian and political scientist Onofre Corpuz: 'Nobody in the Philippines has ever heard of a successful prosecution for graft'.⁵¹ It was in these golden times that Corazon Aquino's father, Don José Cojuangco, acquired 7,000 hectares of the

⁴⁵ Characteristically, even the Communist Party of the Philippines was vulnerable to caciquism. Among its top leaders in the late 1940s were Castro Alejandrino, scion of a large landowning family, and the brothers Lava, intellectuals of landowning origins (an uncle had been a colonel in Aguinaldo's Revolutionary Army). They eventually quarrelled violently with the Hukbalahap Supremo, Luis Taruc, who came from a family of tenant-farmers (both his grandfathers had been sergeants in the Katipunan army). No real surprise that the well-born stood to the militant left of the commoner. This information comes from the extraordinary, recent joint interview conducted by *Solidarity* editor F. Sison José, with Castro Alejandrino, Jesus Lava, Luis Taruc and Fred Sison, and printed in the above-cited 1983 issue of *Solidarity*.

⁴⁶ See the valuable, if ingenious, text by former CIA officer Alvin Scott, *The Philippines Answer to Communism*, Soufard 1955, chapters 3-6 especially.

⁴⁷ Declassified documents cited in Raymond Bonner's *Waiting with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy*, New York 1987, give a nice picture of the Lansdale-Magsaysay relationship. During the 1953 election campaign Lansdale insisted that all Magsaysay's speeches be written by a CIA operative masquerading as a *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent. When he discovered that the candidate had had the impudence on one occasion to use a Filipino speech-writer, the enraged Quiet American walked into Magsaysay's office and knocked him out (pp. 39-40).

⁴⁸ It was the time when Ferdinand Marcos and Corason's husband, Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino, Jr., came to national prominence.

⁴⁹ See Frank H. Golay, *The Philippines: Public Policy and National Economic Development*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1961. See also the Villages chapter in Brennan, ed., *The Marcos Era*, especially pp. 150-55. This well-intentioned economist puts it modestly thus: 'If one were to look for a political explanation of this flawed economic policy, he could find it in the imperfections of a fledgling democracy in which power was still concentrated in the hands of the former landed gentry who turned into manufacturing entrepreneurs during the fifties and sixties. The Philippine legislature, through which tariff, fiscal, and monetary reforms had to pass, was dominated by groups that represented the very industrial sector that had been pampered by overprotection.'

⁵⁰ The internationally celebrated symbol of this freedom was the mock-ruling *Philippines Free Press*. It is less well known that the Locsin family which ran it was violently opposed to any unionization of its staff, and used brazenly brutal methods to thwart it.

⁵¹ *The Philippines* p. 86.

10,300 hectare Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, and turned its management over to his energetic son-in-law Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino, Jr.⁵²

But cacique democracy contained within itself the seeds of its own decay, and these began visibly sprouting towards the end of the 1960s. Uncontrolled and parasitic plundering of state and private resources tilted the Philippines on its long plunge from being the most 'advanced' capitalist society in Southeast Asia in the 1950s to being the most depressed and indigent in the 1980s. By the end of the golden era, 5 per cent of the country's income earners received, probably, about 50 per cent of total income. At the same time, over 70 per cent of state revenues came from regressive sales and excise taxes, and a mere 27.5 per cent from income taxes—largely paid by foreign corporations.⁵³ Combined with a characteristically tropical-Catholic birth-rate of over 3 per cent (which since 1850 had increased the islands' population eightfold), the result was a massive pauperization of the unprivileged.⁵⁴

Ferdinand Marcos: The Supreme Cacique

Cacique democracy in the independent Philippines also led to secular changes in the operation of the political system. The oligarchs more and more followed Chairman Mao's advice to walk on two legs. Manila was where the President resided and where Congress met, where pork barrel funds were dealt out, where licences and loans were secured, where educational institutions proliferated, and where imported entertainments flourished. The dynasties began leaving their haciendas in the hands of sons-in-law and bailiffs and moving into palatial new residential complexes on the outskirts of the old capital. Forbes Park was the first, and still the most celebrated, of these *beaux quartiers*, which remain sociologically unique in Southeast Asia. Elsewhere in the region luxurious houses are jumbled together with the dwellings of the poor.⁵⁵ But the golden ghetto of Forbes Park was policed, as a complex, by armed security guards; access even to its streets required the production of identification papers.

This partial move to Manila combined with demographic increase and the postwar expansion of the suffrage to monetarize political life. It was less and less possible to win elections, even provincial elections, on a forelock-tugging basis. The costs of campaigning increased exponen-

⁵² See Joaquín, *The Agony of Tarlac*, pp. 273–86, for a sly account. Luisita is certainly the most famous hacienda in the Philippines today, and still, pending land-reform, in the hands of the Cojuangcos. Don José acquired it from a French-financed, Spanish-managed company, which became discouraged by persistent 'labour unrest.' In the mid-1950s, its sugar central serviced 1,000 sugar planters and its annual production was valued at eighteen million pesos.

⁵³ Cf. Corpron, *The Philippines*, pp. 77 and 105.

⁵⁴ The Marcos era did not initiate this process, merely accelerated it. Today 70 per cent of the population lives below the World Bank's lordly poverty line. A recent article in *The Philippine Inquirer*, 17 January 1988, offers instructive comparative demographic data on Bangkok and Manila. Bangkok has 25 births per thousand population, and suffers 17.2 postnatal deaths among every 1,000 babies born alive, the figures given for Manila are 63.9 and 69.5 respectively.

⁵⁵ I remember that in the Jakarta of the late 1960s naked slum children played football in the mud thirty yards from the house of a Supreme Court judge. Some of Bangkok's wealthiest families' homes are still located a stone's throw from stinking, cess-pool infested squatter clusters. But the tendencies are in Manila's direction as new, segregated suburbs develop.

tially in the 1960s, not least because the period saw the renewed growth of the private armies. In contrast to the late 1940s, these armed groups were now deployed mainly in intra-oligarchy competition.⁵⁶ Corazon Aquino's husband was conforming to general practice in the late 1960s when he campaigned for a senatorial seat in a black Mercedes ringed with Armalite-ting bodyguards.⁵⁷ With splendid, grumbling insouciance, Senator Sergio 'Serbing' Osmeña, Jr., on losing the 1969 presidential race to Ferdinand Marcos, complained: 'We were outgunned, out-gunned, and outgold.'⁵⁸ By then, at forty per hundred thousand head of population, the Philippines had one of the highest murder rates in the world.

So the stakes slowly grew, and American-era inhibitions slackened. The crux was the presidency, which always had the potentiality of dislocating cacique democracy. We noted earlier that the stability of the system, and the solidarity of the oligarchy, depended on the Congress, which offered roughly equal room at the top for all the competing provincial dynasties. The one-man office of president was not, however, divisible, and came to seem, in the era of independence, a unique prize. The shrewder, older oligarchs had foreseen possible trouble and had borrowed from the US the legal provision that no president could serve for more than two terms—so that the office could sedately circulate within the charmed circle. But it was only a matter of time before someone would break the rules and try to set himself up as Supreme Cacique for Life. The spread of military juntas and one-party dictatorial regimes throughout the Third World in the 1960s made a break of this kind seem more normal: indeed it could even be justified opportunistically as a sign of liberation from 'Western' ideological shackles.

The final destabilizing factor was education. As noted earlier, in Spanish times educational facilities were extremely limited, and the only 'national' language available was Spanish, to which, however, no more than 5 per cent of the indigenous population had access. Secular, twentieth-century American imperialism was a different sort of beast. Immensely confident of Anglo-Saxon world hegemony and the place of English as the language of capitalism and modernity, the colonial regime effortlessly

⁵⁶ The best structural accounts of the system's entropy remain Thomas Nowak and Kay Snyder, 'Chencha Politics in the Philippines: Integration or Instability?' *American Political Science Review*, 68, September 1974, and their 'Economic Concentration and Political Change in the Philippines', in Benedict J. Kerkvliet, ed., *Political Change in the Philippines: Studies of Local Politics Preceding Martial Law*, Honolulu 1974, pp. 153–241.

⁵⁷ The *New York Times*, 9 August 1967. The same account describes Cojuangco financing of Aquino's political career, and the heavily guarded family compound (six California-style ranch houses grouped around a colossal swimming pool)—a useful anecdote to the current martyrology surrounding the assassinated senator.

⁵⁸ The *New York Times*, 16 November 1969. Marcos spent other people's money so lavishly in this campaign that inflation increased 18 per cent, the blackmarket value of the peso fell 50 per cent, and he had to ask a \$100,000,000 prepayment of military-base rent from Washington. *Ibid.*, 6 December 1969. It surely helped his case that he had contributed \$1,000,000 to Nixon's 1968 election campaign (according to Rafael Sales, his executive secretary from 1966 to 1969, as cited in Bonner, *Dealing with a Dictator*, p. 141.)

extruded Spanish⁵⁹ and so expanded an English-language school system that by 1940 the Philippines had the highest literacy rate in Southeast Asia.⁶⁰ After independence, the oligarchy, like other Third World oligarchies, found that the simplest way of establishing its nationalist credentials was to expand cheap schooling. By the early 1960s university degrees were no longer a ruling class near-monopoly.

The huge expansion of English-language education produced three distinct, politically significant, new social groups. Smallest was a radical intelligentsia, largely of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois urban origins, and typically graduates of the University of the Philippines. Among them was Nur Misuari, who in the later 1960s formed the Moro National Liberation Front in the Muslim southwest. Still better known was José Maria Sison, who broke away from the decrepit post-Huk Communist party to form his own, and, borrowing from the Great Helmsman, founded the New People's Army which is today a nation-wide presence and the major antagonist of the oligarchy.⁶¹ (The spread of English, and, later, of 'street Tagalog', in nationalist response to American hegemony, has made possible an archipelago-wide *popular* communication—below the oligarchy—that was inconceivable in the era of Bonifacio or the Hukbalahap.)

Next largest in size was a *bien-pensant* proto-technocracy, which also included graduates from American universities. Drawn from much the same social strata as the radical intelligentsia, it was enraged less by the injustices of cacique democracy than by its dilettantism, venality, and technological backwardness. This group also deeply resented its own powerlessness. When Marcos eventually declared Martial Law in 1972 and proclaimed his New Democracy, it flocked to his standard, believing its historic moment had come. It stayed loyal to him till the early 1980s, and long remained crucial to his credibility with Washington planners, the World Bank and the IMF, and foreign modernizers all and sundry.

Largest of all—if not that large—was a wider urban bourgeois and petty-bourgeois constituency: middle-level civil servants, doctors, nurses, teachers, businessmen, shopkeepers, and so on. In its political and moral outlook it can perhaps be compared with the Progressives (definitely not the Populists) of the United States in the period 1890–1920. In the 1960s it made its political debut in campaigns for honesty-in-government, urban renewal, crackdowns on machine and warlord politics, and the legal emancipation of municipalities and the new suburbs. As might

⁵⁹ Virtually no Filipinos today speak Spanish, but a certain sham-aristocratic aura still surrounds the *idea* of Iberian culture. Older members of the oligarchy prefer to be addressed as Don and Doña. Ideologically the hacienda remains un-Americanized. And children are still overwhelmingly baptized with Spanish names, even if later they acquire American or local nicknames (Juan 'Johnny' Euse, Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino).

⁶⁰ According to Wurfel, *The Philippines*, pp. 691–92, by the early 1920s the funds spent on education had reached nearly half of annual government expenditures at all levels. Between 1903 and 1939 literacy rates doubled, from 20 per cent to 49 per cent. By the latter date nearly 27 per cent of the population could speak English, a percentage larger than for any single local tongue, including Tagalog.

⁶¹ The NPA's top leadership was originally composed largely of University of the Philippines graduates. The same is true today, if to a lesser extent. This leadership appears still to think in English, to judge from the fact that many key party documents have no Tagalog versions.

be expected, this group was both anti-oligarchy and anti-popular in orientation. Had it not been English-educated, and had not President Kennedy secured a major change in the American immigration laws, it might have played a major role in Philippine politics in the 1970s and 1980s. But these factors offered it enticing alternatives, such that, by the mid-1980s, well over a million Filipinos (mainly from this stratum) had emigrated across the Pacific, most of them for good.⁶² This bourgeois haemorrhage in the short run weakened a significant political competitor for the oligarchy, but in the longer run cost it an important political ally—one reason why the Aquino government has so little room for manoeuvre.

The Marcos regime, which began to entrench itself long before the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, was an instructively complex hybrid.⁶³ From one point of view, Don Ferdinand can be seen as the Master Cacique or Master Warlord, in that he pushed the destructive logic of the old order to its natural conclusion. In place of dozens of privatized 'security guards', a single privatized National Constabulary; in place of personal armies, a personal Army; instead of pliable local judges, a client Supreme Court; instead of a myriad pocket and rotten boroughs, a pocket or rotten country, managed by cronies, hitmen, and flunkies.

But from another viewpoint, he was an original; partly because he was highly intelligent, partly because, like his grotesque wife, he came from the lower fringes of the oligarchy. In any case, he was the first elite Filipino politician who saw the possibilities of reversing the traditional flow of power. All his predecessors had lived out the genealogy of mestizo supremacy—from private wealth to state power, from provincial bossism to national hegemony. But almost from the beginning of his presidency in 1965, Marcos had moved mentally out of the nineteenth century, and understood that in our time wealth serves power, and that the key card is the state. Manila's Louis Napoleon.

⁶² 'Before the revolution', so to speak, by comparison with the migration, 'after the revolution', of comparable strata from Cuba, China, and Vietnam. There are instructive contrasts with other parts of Southeast Asia. The Suharto regime in Indonesia is far bloodier and more efficiently repressive than that of Marcos, but emigration has been small. Holland has a low absorptive capacity, and after 1945 Indonesians had abandoned Dutch for 'Indonesian'—neither of them world-languages. Burma (till 1963) and Malaysia were English-educated, but since the late 1950s the regime in London has been increasingly hostile to colonial immigration.

⁶³ There is no satisfactory overall study of the Marcos regime, as a regime. But there are a number of useful texts on its leading personalities and its policies. Bonner's book is not always accurate, but it is good, and extremely funny, on the Marcoses' relationships with assorted American presidents and proconsuls. (Otherwise, see Gary Hawes, *The Philippine State and the Marcos Regime: The Politics of Export*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1987; David A. Rosenberg, ed., *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1979; Alfred W. McCoy, *Prisons on Trial*, Victoria 1984; R. J. May and Francisco Nemenzo, eds., *The Philippines After Marcos*, New York 1985; Walden Bello et al., *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*, San Francisco 1982; Walden Bello and Severina Rivers, eds., *The Logistics of Repression: The Role of U.S. Assistance in Consolidating the Martial Law Regime in the Philippines*, Washington D.C. 1977; Filimon Rodriguez, *The Marcos Regime: Rape of the Nation*, New York 1981; Stephen R. Shalom, *The U.S. and the Philippines: A Study of Neocolonialism*, Philadelphia 1981; Robert B. Stauffer, 'The Political Economy of a Coup: Transnational Linkages and Philippine Political Response', *Journal of Peace Research*, 11:3, 1974, pp. 161-77; Carolina G. Hernandez, 'The Role of the Military in Contemporary Philippine Society', *Delmon Review* (January-February 1984), and the volume edited by Brennan, cited above.

Marcos Settles In

He started with the Army, which until then had been politically insignificant.⁶⁴ The size of the armed forces was rapidly increased, the amplitude of its budget multiplied, and its key posts allotted to officers from the Ilocano-speaking northwestern Luzon from which Marcos himself originated. The final decision to declare martial law, for which plans had been prepared months in advance, was taken in concert with the military high command—Corazon's cousin Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco and Defence Secretary Juan 'Johnny' Ponce Enrile being the only civilian co-conspirators.⁶⁵ The civil service followed, particularly that ambitious sector identified earlier as candidate-technocrats. The state would save the country from what Marcos identified as its prime enemies—the Communists and the oligarchy.

Marcos exploited state, rather than hacienda, power in two other instructive ways. The first was to deal with the Americans, the second with his fellow-oligarchs.

He understood, more clearly than anyone else—including the Filipino Left—that for Washington the Philippines were like Cyprus for London. The huge bases at Subic and Clark Field had nothing to do with the defence of the Philippines as such, and everything to do with maintaining American imperial power along the Pacific Rim. It followed that Manila should treat them as luxury properties, for the leasing of which ever more exorbitant rentals could be charged.⁶⁶ So too the Philippine Army. Raymond Bonner's book, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, amply documents how Marcos, at considerable personal profit, rented a (noncombatant) army engineering battalion to Lyndon Johnson, who in 1965 was busy hiring Asian mercenaries to bolster the 'international crusade' image desired for the American intervention in Vietnam. Next to the South Koreans, he got, mercenary for mercenary, the best price in Asia. (In this effort he had considerable help from his egregious wife, who splashed her way into high-level Washington circles in a way that no Dragon Lady had done since the shimmering days of Madame Chiang

⁶⁴ Following American constitutional practice, all military appointments at the rank of colonel or above had to be approved by Congress. Ambitious officers, aware of how bread is buttered, cosed up to powerful Congressional politicians, who exploited their position to build personal cliques within the military by determining the territorial positioning of favoured clients. Come election time, it was always handy to have the local commandant in one's pocket. The most substantial study of the Philippine military remains Caroline G. Hernandez, 'The Extent of Civilian Control of the Military in the Philippines, 1946-1976' (Ph.D. thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979). It is especially interesting on Marcos's manipulation of budgets, promotions, and educational ideology to secure the installation of the dictatorship.

⁶⁵ Bonner's account, based on declassified American documents, is the most detailed. *Waltzing with a Dictator*, chapters 5-6.

⁶⁶ Subic and Clark Field are the two bases that get the most publicity, but the base-complex as a whole includes, at one extreme, the ultra-secret San Miguel electronic eavesdropping facility, and at the other, the ultra-open Fort John Hay pleasure-dome. The latter, situated just outside the popular mountain resort of Baguio, technically belongs to the American Air Force, but in practice to Manila's rich. It is composed of almost nothing but swimming-pools, golf-courses, tennis-courts, bowling-alleys, movie-halls, diners, dance-clubs, and so on. Anyone can enjoy these amenities if they can pay in dollars. I recently visited the 'base', and in the course of several hours' perambulations met not a single American, military or civilian, but saw hundreds of prosperous Filipinos amusing themselves

Kai-shek.⁶⁷) But he also had the imaginative insolence to try to do to the Americans what they had so long been accustomed to doing to the Filipinos. According to Bonner, Marcos contributed a million dollars to each of Richard Nixon's presidential election campaigns—with, of course, 'state money'—thereby joining that select group of Third World tyrants (Chiang Kai-shek, Pak Chung Hee, Reza Pahlavi, Rafael Trujillo, and Anastasio Somoza) who played an active role in the politics of the metropole.⁶⁸

As far as the oligarchy was concerned, Marcos went straight for its jugular—the 'rule of law'. From the very earliest days, Marcos used his plenary Martial Law powers to advise all oligarchs who dreamt of opposing or supplanting him that property was not power, since at a stroke of the martial pen it ceased to be property.⁶⁹ The Lopez dynasty (based in Iloilo) was abruptly deprived of its mass media empire and its control of Manila's main supplier of electricity.⁷⁰ The 500 hectare Hacienda Osmeña was put up for 'land-reform' somewhat later on.⁷¹ There was no recourse, since the judiciary was fully cowed and the legislature packed with allies and hangers-on. But Marcos had no interest in upsetting the established social order. Those oligarchs who bent with the wind and eschewed politics for the pursuit of gain were mostly left undisturbed. The notorious 'cronies' were, sociologically, a mixed bag, including not only relatives of Ferdinand and Imelda, but favoured oligarchs and quite a few 'new men'.

At its outset, the Martial Law regime had a substantial, if restricted, social base. Its anti-Communist, 'reformist', 'modernizing', and 'law and order' rhetoric attracted the support of frustrated would-be technocrats, much of the underempowered urban middle class, and even sectors of the peasantry and urban poor. Shortly after winning absolute power he announced that the state had seized no less than 500,000 guns from private hands, raising hopes of a less visibly dangerous public life.⁷² A limited land reform succeeded in creating, in the old Huk stamping-grounds of Central Luzon, a new stratum of peasant-owners.⁷³ But as time passed, and the greed and violence of the regime became ever more evident, much of this support dried up. By the later 1970s the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, chapter 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140–1.

⁶⁹ The best account is Hawes, *The Philippine State*.

⁷⁰ More precisely Marcos seized Manilaco, the holding company of a giant Lopez conglomerate that controlled the Manila Electric Company, the nation's second largest bank, plus oil pipelines, an oil refinery, and a major construction business.

⁷¹ Here I rely on an unpublished paper by Raul B. Mojares, 'The Dream Lives On and On: Three Generations of the Osmeñas, 1906–1988,' footnote 8.

⁷² See Lena Gamir Noble, 'Politics in the Marcos Era,' in Brennan, ed., *Crisis in the Philippines*, p. 85. While quite successful in the northern and central parts of the country, the arms sweep was a catastrophic failure in the Muslim south. It is clear that the large-scale insurrection of the Moro National Liberation Front launched shortly after the proclamation of Martial Law was precipitated by the fear that a disarmed Muslim population would be wholly at the mercy of Manila and the Christian majority.

⁷³ See David Wu-fel, *Philippine Agrarian Policy Today: Implementation and Political Impact*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Occasional Paper No. 46, 1977; and Ernesto M. Valencia, 'Philippine Land Reform from 1972 to 1980: Scope, Process and Reality', in Tamaro Rivera, et al., eds., *Feudalism and Capitalism in the Philippines*, Quezon City 1982. For a recent array of perspectives, see the issue of *Scholarship* (Nos. 106–107, 1986) devoted wholly to the problems of agrarian reform.

technocrats were a spent force, and the urban middle class became increasingly aware of the decay of Manila, the devastation of the university system, the abject and ridiculous character of the monopolized mass media, and the country's economic decline.

The real beneficiaries of the regime—aside from the Marcos mafia itself⁷⁴—were two military forces: the National Army and the New People's Army. Martial Law in itself gave the former unprecedented power. But Marcos also used favoured officers to manage properties confiscated from his enemies, public corporations, townships, and so forth. The upper-echelon officers came to live in a style to which only the oligarchy had hitherto been accustomed.⁷⁵ Military intelligence became the regime's beady eyes and hidden ears. Legal restraints on military abuses simply disappeared. And there was only one master now to determine postings and promotions. To be sure, the Old Cacique packed the leadership with pliant placemen from his Ilocano-speaking homeland, but there was still plenty to go round.

On the other hand, the dictatorship encouraged a rapid growth, and slower geographic spread, of the Communist guerrilla forces. No less significant than their expanding rural support was their organized reach into urban areas. One of the most striking features of the last years of the regime was the gradual adoption of a nationalist-Marxist vocabulary by notable sections of the bourgeois intelligentsia, the lower echelons of the Church hierarchy, and the middle class more generally.⁷⁶ Only the militant Left appeared to offer some way out.

The story of the unravelling of the regime following the brazen assassination of Benigno Aquino, Jr., at Manila's airport on 21 August 1983 is too well known to need detailing here. More important is an understanding of the regime that has replaced it.

Riding the 'People Power Revolution'

The initial coalition behind the dead man's widow was wide and (variably) deep: she was then above all Corazon Aquino rather than

⁷⁴ The word is used advisedly. The one Hollywood blockbuster banned under Marcos was *The Godfather*. A crumb under the rhinoceros's hide.

⁷⁵ The officers' Forbes Park, an exclusive new residential area amusingly entitled 'Cornthian Gardens', was the one part of Manila to which, during a recent visit to the metropolis, I was unable to obtain even taxi-access.

⁷⁶ The nationalism was important. It made generally popular the Left's depiction of Marcos as the *Amle* (running dog) of the Americans. Privately, of course, the Left's leadership was well aware that Marcos was actually the *best* docile of the country's presidents. This evaluation is confirmed by Boerner's book, which shows that Ferdinand was vastly more astute than his opposite numbers in Washington. He had Carter's vain mini-Kissinger, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke, in his pocket and charged half a billion dollars for a new five-year bases agreement in 1971. Reagan, an old friend from the 1960s, bundled his famous Vice-President off to Manila to inform Marcos that 'we love your adherence to democratic principle and to the democratic process'. CIA Director Casey, in an earlier incarnation as chairman of the Export-Import Bank, had pushed through the bank's largest-ever foreign loan (\$644,000,000) to finance a splashy nuclear power project in Central Luzon. (The project remains uncompleted though the interest on the loan accounts for about 10 per cent of the Philippines' annual debt payments.) Marcos got \$30,000,000 under the table from contractor Westinghouse, which simultaneously raised its estimates 400 per cent. See *Walking with a Dictator*, pp. 307-9, and 265.

Corazon Cojuangco. It was based on a huge groundswell of revulsion against the Old Cacique and his *manila* Miss Piggy. It included, from the right, ambitious middle-ranking and junior officers of the National Army, frustrated finally by the old regime's visible decay and the ethnic nepotism of its premier danseur; the ever-hopeful technocracy and the non-crony segments of Manila's business community; almost all factions of the Church; the middle class; the non-NPA sectors of the intelligentsia; sundry self-described 'cause-oriented groups' which regarded themselves as the vanguard of a newly-legal Left; and the oligarchs.

The coalition was far too diverse and incoherent to last very long. Two years after the 'People Power Revolution', it has become far narrower and, as it were, more densely packed. First to go were its right and left wings. For the cowboy activists of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), who had played a pivotal role in February 1986 by betraying Marcos, the only genuinely tolerable successor to the old regime was a military junta, or a military-dominated government under their leadership. But this course had no serious domestic support, and was, for a Washington basking in Port au Prince TV glory, in any case out of the question. Besides, cold-eyed realists in the Reagan Administration perfectly understood that the Philippine military was far too factionalized, incompetent, corrupt, vainglorious, and ill-trained to be given any blank cheques.⁷⁷ A series of risible brouhahas, culminating in the Gregorio ('Gringo') Honasan *coup de force* of 28 August 1987, only confirmed the soundness of this judgment. On the left, the situation was more complex. Far the most powerful component within it was the NPA, which had greatly benefited from the Martial Law regime, and had now to decide how to respond to the new constellation of forces. The issue of whether frontally to oppose the Aquino regime, or try substantially to alter its internal equilibrium, was seriously debated in 1986-87. For a complex of reasons, too intricate to detain us here, and the wisdom of which is yet to be determined, the die was cast, early in 1987, for confrontation.⁷⁸ The immediate consequence was the collapse of the legal Left, and the manifest enfeeblement of the 'cause-oriented groups', which, by the time of the Honasan comedy, had lost almost everything but their causes. Out of these developments emerged the real, unbalanced, and uneasy partners of the contemporary Aquino coalition: the oligarchy, the urban middle class, and the Church.

During the new regime's first year, when the clan of the 'People Power Revolution' remained quite strong, the coalition's junior partners were optimistic. The restoration of an open-market press, greatly expanded freedom for assembly and organization, and the crumbling of the crony monopolies and monopsonies, filled the various sectors of the middle class with giddy exhilaration. They could be fully themselves once again. Business confidence would be restored and the Philippines rerouted onto

⁷⁷ See Francisco Nemenzo's fine article, 'A Season of Coups: Military Intervention in Philippine Politics', *Delaware Review*, 34, nos 3-6, 1986, pp 1, 16-25.

⁷⁸ The core judgment was certainly based on estimates of Washington's long-term goals simply justified by the course of events in Central and South America. A valuable introduction to the polymorphous culture of the Philippine Left is Randolph G. David, ed., *Marcosism in the Philippines*, Quezon City 1984.

the path of progress. Good Americans were on their side. Honest technocratic expertise would at last be properly appreciated and rewarded. The intelligentsia (or at least major parts of it) now felt free to detach itself from the radical Left; it had a new home on television and radio, and in the press.

Furthermore, President Aquino's inner circle included not only Cardinal Sin but a number of idealistic human-rights lawyers and left-liberal journalists and academics. And Corazon herself, perhaps taking a leaf out of the Book of Modern Kings, made every effort to appear in public *en bonne bourgeoisie*. Tita ('Auntie'), as she was now called, was a brave, pious, unpretentious housewife who wanted only what was best for her nephews and nieces. The treasurer of Don José Cojuangco's holding company and the coheirress of Hacienda Luisita remained mostly invisible. There was a touching confidence that the country's problems were on their way to sensible solution. She had opened talks with the NPA and with the Muslim insurrectionaries. A major land-reform—which would not affect the middle class, but which promised to undermine the NPA's expanding rural base—would be enacted. The Americans would provide substantial sums in support of restored constitutional democracy. And People Power would, through free and honest elections, create a progressive legislative partner for the President, giving the middle class its long-dreamed-of chance to lead the country. In substantial measure the ecclesiastical leadership shared these hopes, trusting that the new situation would permit the Church to become once again ideologically united and organizationally disciplined.⁷⁹ The catchword of the era was 'democratic space', which is perhaps most aptly translated as 'middle class room for manoeuvre between the military, the oligarchy, and the Communists'.

The second year of the new regime dashed most of these illusions. The talks with Muslim and Communist leaders broke down for essentially the same reason: the Aquino regime found itself in no position to make any attractive concessions. Haunted by nationalist dreams, even those Muslim leaders who seemed prepared to accept 'autonomy', rather than independence, still demanded a Muslim autonomous zone remembered from the American colonial era. Yet ever since the Lansdale-Magsaysay regime had begun transmigrating potential and actual Hukbalahap peasant supporters to 'empty' lands in Mindanao, the island had been rapidly 'Christianized', by spontaneous migrants, land speculators, logging and mining conglomerates, large-scale commercial agribusinesses, and so on. Even had it wished—which it did not—to accede to Muslim dreams, this would have required the Aquino government either forcibly to relocate these tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of 'Christians' (but where to?) or to leave them to the political mercies of justifiably angry Muslims. It lived by its own American-era dreams—a United

⁷⁹ On Church politics, see Dennis Shoemaker's chapter in May and Nemenzo, ed., *The Philippines After Marcos*, and two texts by Robert Youngblood, 'Church Opposition to Martial Law in the Philippines', *Asian Survey*, 18, May 1978, pp. 505–520, and 'Structural Imperialism: An Analysis of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines', *Comparative Political Studies*, 15 April 1982, pp. 29–56. See also *Teaching Ground, Taking Root: Theological and Political Reflections on the Philippine Struggle*, Quezon City 1986, by Edicio de la Torre, who is among the most socially committed and thoughtful of contemporary Filipino clerics.

Philippines—and besides, the Army, which had suffered far more severe casualties fighting the Muslims than combatting the Communists, would not have stood for 'weakness'. With the NPA the same was true. There was nothing; President Aquino could offer the Communists which they did not already have or which the Army would be likely to permit.⁸⁰

Nor were the Americans much help. The Reagan Administration was preoccupied with its own survival, and a dozen 'more important' foreign policy tar-babies. Its own financial recklessness meant that it had now very little to offer the Philippines even in military aid (which remained a pittance, more or less what it wished to give the Nicaraguan 'contras'). Talk of a 'Marshall Plan' for the Philippines vanished with the noise of escaping steam. And the overseas middle class stayed put. Its members might periodically return home with armfuls of presents for the relatives, but they had decided that the future of the bourgeoisie in the Philippines was too uncertain to be worth any substantial investments.⁸¹ In the first year of the regime there had been much bold talk of liquidating the American bases, but by the second it was already clear that they would stay put: the Aquino government felt it could not afford seriously to antagonize Washington, and besides, it could not contemplate the loss in income and jobs that closure would imply. (In the 1980s, the US military was still the second largest employer—after the Filipino state—in the country.) The one important service the Americans did provide was explicit political support in the face of the various *buffs* coup attempts that anticlimaxed in the 'Gringo' ringer of August 1987.

The pivotal issue for the regime coalition was, however, the 'restoration of democracy', signalled by the 11 May 1987 elections for a reanimated Senate and House of the Representatives, and the 18 January 1988 elections for provincial governors, mayors and other local power-holders. The middle-class hope was that these elections would not only set the provisional Aquino government on a firm constitutional base, but would forcefully demonstrate to the Army and the Communists where the popular will lay. Moreover, it would translate People's Power into sufficient institutional power to carry out the domestic reforms deemed essential to the future leadership prospects of the middle class.

⁸⁰ Her one important success was the 'coming over' of Comrade/Father Conrado Balweg, a militant and charismatic (x-) priest, who in the Marcos era had formed his own guerrilla force among the oppressed highland minorities of the Luzon Cordillera. The NPA, which had long featured him in its publicity as a popular hero and an example of Party-Church cooperation, while privately criticizing his womanizing and periodic 'disobedience', now denounced him as an opportunist and counter-revolutionary. The Army continued to distrust and dislike him, not least because the condition of his 'coming over', Aquino's promise to establish a genuinely 'autonomous' Cordillera region, appeared to pave the way for seditions in the Muslim Southwest.

It is instructive that a very successful commercial film on Balweg appeared in 1987. The real Balweg is an extremely complex figure, but in the movie he appears as a surrogate for the Manilian liberal middle class, fighting heroically against both Army barbarity and Communist treachery—of course, for the People.

⁸¹ Nor were they really encouraged to return. There were few jobs for them in the Philippines, and their remittances did much to ease the foreign exchange crisis faced by the government. The same was true of the huge wave of non-middle class Filipino migrants to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is likely that the Philippines is now among the largest net exporters of national personnel in the world.

The Caciques Claim Their Own

It was now and here that the senior partners in the ruling coalition finally made themselves felt. During the first year the oligarchy had had its uneasy moments. Corazon herself might be sound enough, but some of her closest advisers were not; the mass media, for the moment still dominated ideologically by middle-class urban reformists, kept up a constant drumfire in favour of a land-reform that hopefully would destroy the basis of NPA rural power. Even the World Bank, along with senior Japanese and American officials, were arguing the same logic. And, pending the elections, the President held plenary powers. Who could be sure that in a moment of frailty she might not do something fatal?

The alarm was real, if probably ill-founded. COLOR (Council of Land-owners for Orderly Reform—500 magnate members) was hastily established; it sent Corazon resolutions signed with (happily, its own) blood, threatening civil disobedience in the event of serious land-reform. A Movement for an Independent (Sugar) Negros appeared, claiming to be ready to offer armed resistance to impending Manilan injustice.⁸² Lawyers were said, by the press, to be 'going crazy', reclassifying agricultural lands as 'commercial-industrial', signing off surplus plots to infant relatives, fraudulently antedating mortgages, etc.⁸³

What was needed in 1986, as in 1916 and 1946, was cacique democracy. If elections could be promptly and freely held, the oligarchy could hope to return to its pre-1972 control of 'the rule of law', and put everyone—the middle class, the military, their tenants, and the 'rabble'—in their respective places.

On 11 May 1987, national-level elections were held for twenty-four senatorial, and two hundred congressional seats. The outcome turned out to be eminently satisfactory. To quote a well-informed Filipino study: 'Out of 200 House Representatives, 130 belong to the so-called "traditional political families", while another 39 are relatives of these families. Only 31 Congressmen have no electoral record prior to 1971 and are not related to these old dominant families. . . . Of the 24 elected senators, there are a few non-traditional figures but the cast is largely made up of *members of prominent pre-1972 political families*.'⁸⁴ Newly-elected Senator John Osmeña—grandson of Commonwealth Vice-President Sergio Osmeña, Sr., and nephew of defeated 1969 presidential candidate Sergio Osmeña, Jr.—told the press: 'One member of the

⁸² *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, 25 July 1987.

⁸³ *The Manila Chronicle*, 23 July 1987. One particularly panic-stricken cacique family was reported to have set up forty separate dummy corporations to retain its landholdings.

⁸⁴ A survey conducted by the Institute of Popular Democracy, quoted in the *Philippines Daily Inquirer* of 24 January 1988. (Italics added to emphasize the 'comeback' nature of the new legislature.) I owe this reference and the one that follows to Mojares, 'The Dream Goes On and On'.

family who does not do good is one too many, but ten members in the family doing good are not even enough.’⁸⁵

The results were widely interpreted as a triumph for Corazon Aquino in so far as twenty-three of the twenty-four victorious senatorial candidates ran as her supporters and as members of various nominal parties in her electoral coalition.⁸⁶ Something comparable occurred in the Lower House.⁸⁷ But probably the outcome is better designated as a triumph for Corazon Cojuangco. The study quoted above notes that: ‘Of the 167 Representatives who belong to the dominant families or are related to them, 102 are identified with the pre-1986 anti-Marcos forces, while 67 are from pro-Marcos *parties or families*.’ A shake in the kaleidoscope of oligarchic power.

Not that the shrewder caciques failed to recognize certain new realities, including the genuine popular appeal of the President herself. (A significant number of Marcos collaborators swung over to her bandwagon.) When Congress finally opened in the late summer of 1987, it proclaimed itself committed to land-reform, and appointed ‘outsiders’ to the chairmanships of the Senate and House committees in charge of agrarian affairs. But within days the chairman of the House Committee on Agrarian Reform, Representative Bonifacio Gillego, an ex-military intelligence official converted to ‘social democracy’, was bemoaning the fact that seventeen of the twenty-one members of his committee were landlords—including presidential brother José Cojuangco, presidential uncle-in-law Herminio Aquino, and the virago of Negros, Hortensia Starke.⁸⁸

A fuller revival of the ancien régime came with the provincial and local elections which opened on 18 January 1988, and which found 150,000 candidates competing, *à l'américaine*, for close to 16,500 positions—an average of nine aspirants per plum.⁸⁹ These elections were of such an exemplary character that they deserve comment in their own right. In some places they represented happy reconsolidations. On the island of Cebu, for example, Emilio ‘Lito’ Osmeña, brother of Senator John, won the island’s governorship, while his cousin Tomas (‘Tommy’), son of Sergio ‘Serging’ Osmeña, Jr., defeated a candidate from the rival

⁸⁵ ‘Soony move vs. Barcenas explained’, *San Star Daily*, 29 October 1987. The Osmeñas had gone through difficult times under Martial Law. Sergio (‘Serging’) Osmeña, Jr., had been severely wounded in the notorious Plaza Miranda affair in 1971 (the greening of an—oligarchic, but anti-Marcos—Liberal Party election rally in downtown Manila, Marcos declared it the work of the NPA, but it was widely believed that the killers were military men or convicts in Marcos’s own pay). After the declaration of Martial Law he exiled himself to California, where he died in 1984. There John, after initially applauding Ferdinand’s declaration, eventually wended his way, returning only after the Aquino assassination.

⁸⁶ Vice-President Salvador ‘Doy’ Laurel’s United Nationalist Democratic Organisation (Unido), José ‘Peping’ Cojuangco’s Philippine Democratic Party-Laban (PDP-Laban), Paul Aquino’s Lakas ng Bayan (Strength of the Nation), and Senator Jovito Salonga’s Liberal Party. Only the Liberals date back to the pre-martial law era.

⁸⁷ The pro-government coalition won 150 out of 200 seats. The Left, running under the umbrella organization Alliance of New Politics, secured a mere two.

⁸⁸ *The Manila Chronicle*, 25 July 1987.

⁸⁹ *The Manila Chronicle*, 18 January 1988.

mestizo Cuen-co dynasty to become Mayor of Cebu City.⁹⁰ A little to the north, in the fiefdom of the Duranos, the eighty-two-year-old Ramon Durano, Sr., ran successfully for mayor of Danao City, with the backing of one violent son, Jesus 'Don' Durano, against the opposition of another. The night after the election, losing candidate Thaddeus 'Deo' Durano, waylaid by intra-family assassins, ended up in critical condition in a Cebu City emergency ward.⁹¹ The old warlord, who for the duration of Martial Law was a key Marcos henchman on Cebu, this time ran on the ticket of the PDP-Laban, the machine of President Aquino's brother José Cojuangco—who successfully recruited many other Marcos caciques under his sister's banner. Similar victories occurred in Olon-gapo—downtown from the Subic Naval Base—where Richard Gordon, husband of Congresswoman Katharine Gordon, became mayor; in Western Negros, where Congressman José Carlos Lacson was now joined by governor-elect Daniel Lacson, Jr.; and so on. . . .

Not that the old dynasties had things entirely their own way by any means. In some areas close to metropolitan Manila, middle-class reformists mobilized popular elements as well as 'minor' dynasties to break up old fiefdoms. The Laurel machine in Batangas collapsed, to the embarrassment of the ineptly scheming Vice-President, Salvador 'Doy' Laurel. The Rizal empire of Corazon's uncle, Congressman Juan 'Komong' Sumulong, was decimated. In Pampanga, out went the Nepomucenos, Lazatins and Lingads. In the Iloilo fiefdom of the Lopezes, Olive Lopez-Padilla, daughter of one-time Vice-President Fernando Lopez and sister of Congressman Albertito Lopez, ran for governor on the wonderful vulgarian-hacendado slogan of 'Bring Iloilo back to the Lopezes', but was nonetheless soundly thrashed.⁹² In Mindanao's Cagayan de Oro, the Fortich dynasty, described by *The Manila Bulletin* as having run the place 'since the beginning of the century', was humiliated.⁹³ No less interesting were certain military participations. In the Cagayan valley of northeastern Luzon, ex-Lieutenant-Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo, a key member of the Honasan rebel group, out-intimidated the local caciques (Dupayas and Tuzons) to seize the governorship. In Marcos's old base in Northern Ilocos, the vice-governorship was won, from military prison, by ex-Colonel Rolando Abadilla—once the dreaded chief of the Metropolitan Command Intelligence Security Group under Marcos, a thug widely suspected of helping to mastermind the assassination of Corazon's husband, and a major participant in the abortive coups of January and April 1987.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ The Osmena triumph represents the optimum outcome for a dynasty: it has a member in the national legislature, controls the provincial government, and runs the largest local commercial centre. Note that Tomas's defeated rival, José 'Boy' Cuenco, is a younger brother of Senate President pro tem Antonio 'Tony' Cuenco, and grandson of former Senate President, the late Mariano Cuenco.

⁹¹ *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, 22 January 1988, and *The Philippines Star*, 23 January 1988.

⁹² *The Philippines Star*, 22 January 1988, and *The Philippines Daily Inquirer*, 21 January 1988. She meant, of course, 'back' from Ferdinand and Imelda.

⁹³ *The Manila Bulletin*, 21 January 1988.

⁹⁴ See *The Philippines Daily Inquirer*, 22 January 1988, for an account of Abadilla's past, and *The Manila Times*, 19 January 1988, for a description of the torturer being flown, at state expense, from his Manila cell to a polling booth in Ilocos Norte. Cojuangco's advisers may have been pleased to see Aguinaldo 'join the system'—and a long way from Manila. Even the case of Abadilla (whom Army leaders insisted would not be allowed to assume office) may have served the purpose of demonstrating how free the balloting really was.

Even the NPA was indirectly drawn in. It was widely, and credibly, reported that in many areas where it had politico-military ascendancy, the movement charged candidates substantial fees for permission to campaign unmolested, and, here and there, lent unofficial support to sympathetic local aspirants.⁹⁵ Not that the civil war seriously let up. A day or two after the polls closed, Hortensia Starke's Hacienda Bino was burned to the ground, and the Hacienda La Purisima of Enrique Rojas, a top official of the National Federation of Sugar Planters, barely escaped the same fate.⁹⁶

Politics in a Well-Run Casino

These variable outcomes need to be viewed in a larger framework for their implications to be well understood. The key facts to be borne in mind are these: No less than 81 per cent of the country's 27,600,000 eligible voters voted.⁹⁷ One or other elective post was available for every 1,400 voters. The average number of contestants per post was roughly nine. In most places the contests were 'serious' in a rather new way—forty-one candidates were assassinated by rivals (*not* the NPA) in the course of the brief campaign.⁹⁸ In different ways, and to different extents, almost all political leaderships, from right to left, participated and could imagine that they had, up to a certain point, benefited. Everywhere, local patronage machines were replacing the centralized Marcos-era appointive *apparatus*.

In any well-run casino, the tables are managed in the statistical favour of the house. To keep drawing customers, the owners must provide them with periodic, even spectacular, successes. A win is a splendid confirmation of the player's skill and heaven's favour. A loss demonstrates his/her misfortune or ineptitude. Either way, it's back to the tables as soon as possible. So with the blackjack of cacique democracy. Each local triumph for reform promises a rentier future; each loss signals miscalculations or ill luck. At the end of the week or the year, however, the dealer is always in the black.

The truth is that American electoralism remains powerfully attractive, even when, perhaps especially when, married to Spanish caciquism in a geographically fragmented, ethnolinguistically divided, and economi-

⁹⁵ The army leaked a purported NPA circular warning that 'all candidates wishing to campaign in guerrilla zones have to get a safe-conduct pass from us for their own safety. The CP-NPA will not answer for those without it'. A guerrilla leader in Quezon Province, interviewed by Agence-France Presse, confirmed NPA taxation of candidates, affirming that the money would be used to 'advance the revolution'. It is said that such 'election passes' were sold for between 10,000 and 30,000 pesos (\$500-\$1,500) apiece. The army claimed that about 10 per cent of all candidates (say, 15,000 people) were paying for such passes. See *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 18 January 1988.

⁹⁶ *Malaya*, 21 January 1988.

⁹⁷ *The Manila Bulletin*, 21 January 1988.

⁹⁸ The government claimed that the elections were quite exceptionally peaceful: only 124 deaths all told, compared to 204 deaths in the 11 May 1987 congressional elections, 296 in the 1986 presidential elections, 178 in the 1981 presidential elections, 411 in the 1980 local elections, and 334 in the 1971 (pre-Martial Law) congressional campaign. *Malaya*, 19 January 1988. But as the *Philippine Daily Globe*, 20 January 1988, rightly pointed out, in both the 1986 and 1981 campaigns only four candidates had been murdered—the huge bulk of the victims being 'small fry'. What was new about January 1988 was that a full third of the dead were actual contenders.

cally bankrupt polity. It disperses power horizontally, while concentrating it vertically; and the former draws a partial veil over the latter. 'Anyone' can get elected: look at the high, uncoerced turnout; look at the number of competing candidates (you too can run); look at the execrable colonels (better they campaign in the provinces than plot in the capital); look at the (probably temporary) fall of the Laurels and the Nepomucenos; look at the NPA's electoral levies, which, from a certain angle, can be aligned with the election-time exactions of the warlords.⁹⁹ Precisely because the competition is violently real, it is easy to be persuaded to cheer for, as it were, Arsenal or Chelsea, without reflecting too hard on the fact that both are in the First Division, and that one is watching the match from the outer stands, not playing in it.

But, of course, by no means everyone enjoys spectator sports. Shortly after the 18 January elections a curious reporter went to interview employees at the Cojuangcos' Hacienda Luisita, who had just voted massively for Arsenal. What difference had it made to their lives that Tita Cory had become President? 'We used to get rice and sugar free, now we must pay. We used to get free water from the pumps in our yards. Now we must pay for pumped-in water because molasses from the sugar mill has seeped into our wells.' Daily wages? They had been raised by 2.50 pesos (\$0.12) for field-hands, and 8 pesos (\$0.40) for mill-workers. Level of employment? Usually from two to four days a week, in good times. One elderly man spoke of trying to survive by busying to additional work in the neighbouring province of Pampanga: transportation costs took 23 pesos from the daily wage of 40 pesos, leaving him a net of 17 pesos (\$0.85). It still made sense to go. The reporter was told that a worker, who had been quoted in an international magazine as saying that on the hacienda horses ate better than the hands, had been 'summoned' by management. He had had to retract the slander. But one of the interviewees concluded: 'Of course it is true. The horses get Australian grain and eggs, while we hardly have the meat.'¹⁰⁰ All those interviewed either refused to give their names, or asked not to be identified.

⁹⁹ In the summer of 1987 the liberal part of the Manila press was every day reporting with alarm on the growth of a nation-wide, coordinated system of extremist anti-Communist vigilante groups, financed by the oligarchy, the CIA, and the gonzo American ex-General Singlaub. In January 1988, during the election campaign, this broad fascist front virtually disappeared from print. Needless to say, the groups had not themselves disbanded. It had become apparent that by then most had abandoned Singlaubian mufti and gone back to duty as local gangs of thugs, recruited each to promote the local power, especially in elections, of particular, contentious local dynasties. There is no question but that these gangs are instruments of class oppression and frequently cooperate closely with local military and police personnel. They play an important part in the ongoing civil war. But their very dispersion and localism show how confident the caciques are, and how little they feel the need to crawl together under the apron of the military.

¹⁰⁰ *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 23 January 1988. The end of the final sentence is clearly garbled, and probably should read 'anything to eat', or 'any meat'.

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Ex-Marxism Without Substance: Being A Real Reply to Laclau and Mouffe

There is a discursive strategy commonly adopted by politicians, particularly at election time, in the face of discomfiting questions. It consists of appearing to respond to a questioner but without actually answering her question. The thing has the external form of an answer but is not one. Practically everyone knows how this works. The politician subtly alters the terms of the question to suit his own convenience, or substitutes a different one, or just repeats what he has already said (which may have prompted the question in the first place), or talks about something else altogether—or uses some combination of these moves. In any case, he does not answer. It is with just such a ‘politician’s reply’ that Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have responded to my criticisms of their book. To have expected that they would receive these with any warmth would obviously have been foolish. But no even moderately careful reader, such as one might think each of them had good enough reason in this case to be, can have been left in doubt as to what the

criticisms were. I lay them out in summary and then show, one by one, how Laclau and Mouffe have thought fit to deal with them.

After a brief introduction, to whose subject matter I shall later return, my critique of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* falls into two main sections. In the first, I argue that the book presents an impoverishing caricature of the Marxist tradition, and in the second, that what it offers instead is intellectually empty. As each of these arguments itself falls into two major parts, there are four contentions here: (1) that the authors caricature Marxism by their habitual procedure of confronting it with spurious, absurdly rigid antitheses; (2) that the account they render of some key Marxist thinkers is a travesty of the tradition, reducing and devaluing it and distorting many of its ideas; (3) that their own social theory is all but vacuous: conceptually slippery at decisive points and unable to explain anything specific; and (4) that it is also normatively indeterminate, fit to support virtually any kind of politics, progressive or reactionary. In addition, early in the first of the essay's two sections I introduce a theme which is then pursued as and where relevant through both of them, namely: (5) that in the book's inflated rhetoric of 'essentialism', 'suture', 'closure', there is a facile criticism of the thought of others, undisciplined by responsible criteria and amounting to a form of obscurantism. Finally, in a concluding section on the authors' overt politics, I note (6) how disappointingly thin are the ideas on democracy from two would-be 'radical' democrats and, worse than thin, the appearance here also of some of the more standard tropes of Cold War anti-Marxism. Half a dozen central arguments, then.

1. Polarities

Laclau and Mouffe begin their response to the first one by misstating it. I am supposed to have reproached them with having '*based (their) main theoretical conclusions*' on rigid oppositions; with having 'counterposed two polar and exclusive alternatives, without considering the possibility of intermediate solutions that avoid both extremes'.¹ Not so. And indeed the opposite of the point I make repeatedly: which is that they *criticize Marxism* in the light of excessively polarized alternatives, whilst allowing themselves the intermediacy they need and, more, downright imprecision and evasiveness. This contrast is formulated—explicitly—at least three times and is fundamental to the structure of my critique.² The misstatement is an enabling one, in the sense of helping to yield the appearance of answers where there are none, via a shift from the polarity criticized to some other.

(i) Take first, for the unadorned purity of the displacement, the third of the examples I discussed, objective interests. As Laclau and Mouffe do not trouble to remind NLR's readers which particular antithesis it was I took exception to in this matter, let me do it. It was the 'clear' 'alternative' (their words): either one has a theory in which 'an absolutely

¹ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism without Apologies' (hereafter WA), *New Left Review* 166, November/December 1987, p. 92

² Norman Geras, 'Post-Marxism?' (hereafter PM), *New Left Review* 163, May/June 1987, pp. 50, 51, 72

united working class will become transparent to itself at the moment of proletarian chliasm' in which case one can believe in objective interests; or one abandons that theory, and the notion is then 'meaningless'. I pointed out that a concept of objective interests does not require belief in all of *that*. No Marxist has to choose between objective interests with chliasm and the rest and rejecting the concept altogether. To which the 'reply' now is: we do not criticize the notion of interests as such, only that of objective interests (as though I had said different); and because we know there are interests, it is not a rigid 'either/or' alternative we put forward—meaning presumably that interests as Laclau and Mouffe conceive them stand between objective interests and just no interests. But *this* was not the alternative I criticized and *their own* conception of these things, however 'intermediate', is not pertinent to what I did criticize: namely, the ludicrous choice they posed for Marxists. Such is what they call showing 'in all three cases' how *my* criticism is based on 'misrepresentation'.³

It might have been more charitable to pass over this as just the authors' way of retreating from a formulation they did not wish to defend, were it not for the fact that they have simply replaced that one with others of its kind: to wit, that the idea of objective interests presupposes something inscribed in the nature of agents 'as a gift from Heaven'; and that 'only God and Geras know' how this is compatible with a 'non-essentialist' social theory. Well, really . . . I had already noted an occurrence of this gift-from-Heaven 'thesis' as a substitute for serious argument, over the question of human nature.⁴ To no avail. Not just my own and others' defence of the latter concept on carefully reasoned, theoretical and empirical, grounds but a whole literature on human needs seems to have passed these humanists by. Apostles of intellectual openness and pluralism, they can see no creditable basis for a view here different from theirs; it could only be a slightly crazed conception of socialist revolution or, if not that, then—this. Mark, as relevant to another issue I shall come to, their use of the language of religious faith—'chliasm', 'gift from Heaven', 'God'—as a negative reference point.

(ii) On the question of relative autonomy things are slightly more complex. Laclau and Mouffe are willing this time to defend the rigid alternative I criticized them for posing, so demonstrating that I did not misrepresent them; but only in conjunction with pursuing the claim that I did misrepresent them. No problem: they simply obfuscate the contours of the *particular* antithesis I complained of—as addressed by them to Marxists—in order to show again how they, for their part, steer a most judicious course between extremes. Citing a passage from their book which, this too, they forbear now to put before the reader, I gave evidence of the choice they defined for *Marxism*: either so strong a notion of determination that the concept of relative autonomy becomes 'redundant'; or else the entities theorized as relatively autonomous are simply 'not determined' by the set of basic determinants, which cannot

³ WA, p. 92. For this and the next paragraph, see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (hereafter HSS), Verso, London 1985, p. 84; PM, p. 51; and WA, pp. 96–7.

⁴ PM, p. 75—in reference to HSS, p. 117.

therefore be that. This is a choice in effect, I argued, between these determinants determining totally and not determining at all, 'explaining everything and determining nothing'; a choice, for Marxists, of either openly embracing economism or kissing historical materialism goodbye. At the same time, I made it perfectly clear, not once and not twice but three times at *that* point in my text, what the authors saw as the proper solution of this Marxist 'dilemma': namely (and quoting them), 'plurality of political and social spaces', and again 'irreducible plurality of the social'; and once more (in my own voice) 'plurality'. Not only that, but I went on later, apropos of 'hegemonic articulation', to give an account of this plurality—complex and fluid; 'crisscrossed by antagonisms'; with no privileged centre but many articulatory practices; of multiply constituted, mutually limiting identities, struggles, movements; and so forth—an account that could have left no one in ignorance of the fact that Laclau and Mouffe do believe in the reciprocal effectivity or mutual interaction of one thing and another.⁵

In response I told a simple story. If I am chained to a post by the ankle, then the chain is a basic determinant of my lifestyle since it will powerfully affect it—and I enjoy a relative autonomy in what I can do. The story had one point and one point only. This was not to suggest that, say, capitalist relations of production are to the bourgeois state *exactly like* a chain is to a person chained. Nor was it to deny that there is room for serious argument and difference in this difficult area: I expressed myself—again, quite explicitly—to the contrary, my theme being precisely that it was the way this question, amongst others, was posed in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* that foreclosed the possibility of any fruitful intellectual engagement with a flat, arbitrary 'either/or'. No, the point of the story was to show that a fundamental determinant, to be one, need not explain or determine everything; that Marxists are not bound to choose—in plainest words—'between the most extravagant economic reductionism and what the authors here commend to us, just plurality' (or between the alternatives, as I also put it, 'Either one is all or all are one'); that we could just hold, about the state in capitalist society, 'that capitalist relations of production, and the configuration of classes they define, are *primary* to the explanation of such politics'.⁶

A Relation of Omnipotence

There are three components to Laclau and Mouffe's effort of reply.⁷ First, they present my argument in a form that leaves it nicely ambiguous what I was criticizing: whether—and as I was—the all-determining/not-determining alternative they lay down for Marxism, thereby rendering relative autonomy unthinkable in historical-materialist terms; or their rejection of this concept themselves owing to the overly rigid constraints on their own thought—as I was not. This confected ambiguity then allows them carefully to explain, over and again, that *they*, you see, *do* recognize 'the relative efficacy of each sphere', and do *not* 'set up a rigid alternative between total autonomy and absolute subordination'.

⁵ PM, pp. 48–50 (vs 8–10 HSS, pp. 139–40) and 67–9.

⁶ Emphasis here added. PM, pp. 50, 63.

⁷ For what follows, see WA, pp. 92–5.

Another evasion. A displacement of my question, which remains without a reply, as we shall see. Second, they charge me with 'sleight of hand' and a 'trick', because with the example of the chain I transform a relation of determination into a relation of mere limitation. The short answer to this is that I do not. But Laclau and Mouffe simply *leave out* anything inconvenient for them. For all its artificiality, the example was put together with the degree of care necessary to my purpose, which was to give a model of powerful but less than total determination, combining both limits and pressures. After describing how it might limit me, I therefore wrote, 'The chain *not only limits* me, negatively; it *also compels* me to certain actions'; and illustrated this point in turn.⁸ So important to the authors is it that determination is not mere limitation that they repeat it three times in a dozen lines. How was it possible, then, for them to overlook just this aspect of the argument, and in dealing out a language of trickery at that? I do not know. But a worrying pattern is becoming clear here. It is for all the world as if they were investing everything on the circumstance that their readers will not simultaneously be reading my essay: a rather short-sighted approach to intellectual debate.

Third, and exposing the futility of all this, Laclau and Mouffe just repeat the concept of determination I had put in question. Determination, it so 'happens', is not only not mere limitation, it is not any combination of limits and pressures (or conditions, influences, causes, etc.) short of the whole works. Thus, we are told: 'the base/superstructure model affirms that the base . . . *determines* the superstructure, in the same way that the movements of a hand determine the movements of its shadow on a wall' and that this is a relation of *expression*; and that the concepts of determination in the last instance and relative autonomy are '*logically incompatible*'; and that the former of them denotes 'a relation of omnipotence'. Attempts to complicate the model with a notion of 'mediations' do not change anything, since entities related via mediations are, strictly, not even separate. There can be no effectively autonomous entities if determination in the last instance is 'an *apriori* truth', because that is the part of the essence of such entities. I think it will be readily agreed that these observations do restate the view of determination I criticized. But what is the argument for it? There is no argument. That is what determination *means*. We have been given a series of stipulative definitions, nothing more. The authors themselves obscurely appreciate the point when, after nearly a thousand words of this, they confess parenthetically—about one of their stipulations, but it applies to the whole lot—that all their 'reasoning' here is 'actually, unnecessary' since affirming fundamental determination and effective autonomy simultaneously was inconsistent from the beginning'. That was, indeed, what I cited them as holding, and then contested (as being the 'merest verbal edict').⁹ How is it an answer, though, simply to say it again, even several times? It is confirmation of the criticism and not a reply to it. Further, if this is the level of the discussion, I can just open my dictionary where the *first* meanings given for 'determine' are 'to put

⁸ PM, p. 49—emphasis here added.

⁹ Ibid.

terms or bounds to' and 'to limit'.¹⁰ From 'anti-essentialist' theoreticians of discursive multi-formity—and who invoke the authority of Wittgenstein to boot—one could have expected a little better.

For, to imagine that the history of Marxist thought could be so adjudicated by definitional fiat is preposterous. Starting with Marx's 1859 *Preface, fons et origo* in this matter, the relationship under discussion is formulated not in one univocal definition but with a series of terms, of different force ('corresponds', 'conditions', 'determines'), and even there only 'as the *guiding thread* of my studies'.¹¹ The subsequent history of Marxism could be written as one long meditation, with real differences internal to it, on the exact nature, scope, strength, of that relationship. But an *omnipotent* base and a superstructure determined *like a shadow on the wall*: that is the reductionist caricature I made objection to, repeated in spades. If there have been Marxisms like it, other Marxisms refused so to be, and the fault of Laclau and Mouffe's whole standpoint, as I showed, is to rule such refusal incoherent, within any historical materialism meaningfully so called, by simple diktat: with determination, sorry, no relative autonomy! One (relevant) episode of recent intellectual history is now cast in a new light. All of Althusser's project appears to have been based on a semantic mistake, since he insisted, as no one more vehemently, that relations of determination are not relations of expression, when . . . they are.

Systems of Domination

Setting word-play aside, therefore, I just put again the question Laclau and Mouffe have not looked squarely in the face. Why is there no logical space between 'the most extravagant economic reductionism' and mere 'plurality'? Why no space for a notion of explanatory *primacy*? How *could* this be ruled out as a matter of logic alone? Let us take only one argument that has been important within Marxism. This is the argument that it makes a difference whether or not the political institutions of a capitalist society are parliamentary-democratic ones resting on an ensemble of 'liberal' rights, practices and procedures: a 'quite enormous difference', as Trotsky put it in connection with Nazism, and for workers' organizations, 'a question of political life or death'. The point has been formulated in various ways. As by Trotsky himself, who spoke of parliamentary democracy and fascism as two 'different systems of (class) domination', within the former of which the workers are able to create 'elements of proletarian democracy'; 'defensive bulwarks'; 'within the bourgeois democracy, by utilizing it, by fighting against it, their own strongholds and bases of *proletarian democracy*: the trade unions, the political parties, the educational and sport clubs, the cooperatives, etc.' Or as by Luxemburg, whose ideas on parliamentary democracy I have myself criticized in another respect, but for whom it was 'one of the most

¹⁰ Cf. Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, Glasgow 1976, pp. 87–91. It includes, as if by foresight, the following: 'Matters of this degree of seriousness and complexity will not be settled by verbal definition but arguments about them can be thoroughly confused by insistent and pseudo-authoritative application of one fixed sense of this highly variable word and its derivatives.'

¹¹ See David McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, Oxford 1977, p. 389 (emphasis added), and Michael Evans, *Karl Marx*, London 1973, pp. 61–5.

powerful and indispensable means of carrying on the class struggle', 'necessary to the working class because it creates the political forms (autonomous administration, electoral rights, etc.) which will serve . . . as fulcrums in its task of transforming bourgeois society'.¹² However formulated, it is a view that has been common to all serious Marxist thinkers, and it has no credible sense other than that political institutions and structures have a specific effectivity of their own and are therefore *not* the mere epiphenomena ('shadows') of class or economic power. And—contrary to the 'simplistic' view the authors here allege—political democracy is not reducible to this: it is *not* the pure expression, or simple instrument, of the interests of a dominant class. As a *reality* with important consequences, as (to some degree) a separate and independent institutional configuration, its structures and procedures must be given due causal weight.

At the same time, the Marxist tradition has never accepted the view of the state propagated by liberalism and pluralist political science: as a sort of neutral arena; or arbiter or mediator between and 'above' classes. Marxists reject such notions because, in their judgement, the competing influence, the limits *and* the pressures, exerted by structures of exploitation and class carry a *greater* causal weight, and their effect is that the state tends to give capitalist interests priority over those of working people—not in everything and without exception, but in general, most of the time, in what matters most. Hence, *relative* autonomy only; but it is no less real for that and does not mean state forms are merely nugatory: Marxists are also capable of thinking in terms of more and less. Nor is the judgement they make here, concerning the explanatory *primacy* of relations of production and class, 'an *a priori* truth': it is an empirical hypothesis, albeit of long historical range; subject to exceptions as well as to confirmation; subject also, in principle, to the possibility of being falsified should there (turn out to) be too much and too cogent historical counter-evidence to it. The serious and interesting issues at stake, therefore, are not advanced a single millimetre by bandying about definitions of a thought-stifling kind ('determines' is 'omnipotent', 'mediations' means 'not separate', and so forth). What the mechanisms of bourgeois hegemony are, what the exact ways in which class power determines—effects, limits or conditions—political results at the level of the state, is one such issue. How much explanatory importance is to be assigned to: a) the modes of *economic power* as such, the various ways in which capitalist interests and actions either indirectly constrain or bring direct pressure to bear upon the state; b) factors of *social composition*, that is, the extent to which the class origins and background of those who make, administer and adjudicate law, align them with the dominant economic class; c) factors of *structural limitation*, in other words, the (differential) degrees to which different types of state and their constituent structures—historically shaped as in every case they have been by some particular nexus of dominant class inter-

¹² See Leon Trotsky, 'What Next?' in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, New York 1971, pp. 144, 154–5, 158. Rosa Luxemburg, 'Social Democracy and Parliamentarianism', in Robert Looker (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg. Selected Political Writings*, London 1972, p. 110, and 'Social Reform or Revolution', in Mary-Alice Waters (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York 1970, p. 20, and cf. my *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, Verso, London 1976, pp. 51–63.

ests—block or hinder access to decision making by the majority of the ruled?

These are difficult questions, in which the assessment of evidence is critical. More than one view about them is possible, obviously. A lot of Marxists make the sort of judgement they do in this matter because they consider the volume of evidence in favour of the historical-materialist hypothesis to be rather formidable. One can perfectly well respect other, competing views, other assessments, of the historical evidence, soberly presented and conscientiously argued for. More: any serious Marxism is duty bound to engage with these. What is much harder, however, is to respect a view, from people themselves quite lately Marxist, in which any rational form of Marxism has all at once become *unthinkable*, and by act of definition. This smacks of something else: intemperate flight, perhaps, or mentality of repentance; in any case, what can aptly be called intellectual 'closure'.¹³

Double Logic

(iii) The other of the extreme antitheses I objected to concerned the process of unification of a fragmentary working class. It was Laclau and Mouffe's alternative—formulated in connection with Luxemburg's thought—either 'necessary laws', 'proletarianization', 'crisis' (unification, that is, by sheer economic determinism), or else fragmentation is 'permanent' (and class, consequently, not fundamental to the unities which politics constructs). My reply to this, as before, was '*tertium datur*': a common class situation and some economic tendencies of capitalism could be seen, not as inexorably producing proletarian unity, just as providing the conditional basis for a socialist politics with that goal.¹⁴ The authors now complain of a 'flagrant' misquotation on my part. I omitted to say that they were here only engaging in a 'game' of 'frontiers', wherein they extended in turn the 'operative area' covered by the different logics of structural determinism and spontaneism. The above alternative *only* arises from a sort of experimental *reductio ad absurdum*, in which Marxism is taken in its most 'essentialist', 'exclusively determinist' versions. But, outside of that. . . well, they themselves not

¹³ A brief comment on Nicos Mouzels's contribution to this question. Though he too is concerned largely—but from his own angle—to defend Marxism against Laclau and Mouffe's criticisms, Mouzels contends that there is 'a type of reductionism . . . inherent in all Marxist discourse'. This is because even overtly non-reductionist Marxists, such as stress the relative autonomy of the political sphere, still subject the latter to a subtle 'downgrading'. By contrast with the economic, which is treated as a site of structural determination and as capable of theorization as that, the political becomes the site of pure agency and conjuncture and so its differential forms or 'modes' are not theorized in their own right or given, in practice, the sort of weight conceded in principle in the affirmations of relative autonomy. As follows from what I say in the text, I do not accept this. What is true is that theories of the political within Marxist thought are still very underdeveloped. But the suggestion that the political sphere is simply reduced in all Marxism to a kind of untheorized, rolling conjuncture, with no real explanatory force being granted to different political *forms*, does not square with these arguments regarding the specificity of both fascism and parliamentary democracy. They concern precisely *types of state*, (in Trotsky's words) 'different systems of . . . domination' and their differential effects. Mouzels himself, it may be noted, treats Marxism's theoretical underdevelopment in this area as remediable, so permitting that the reductionism I think he wrongly alleges is not after all actually 'inherent' to historical materialism. See Nicos Mouzels, 'Marxism or Post-Marxism?', *New Left Review* 167, January/February 1988, pp. 108, 117–21.

¹⁴ HSS, p. 13, PM, pp. 50–1.

only 'pointed out the presence of a double historical logic in the text of Rosa Luxemburg'—determinism *and* spontaneism—they 'presented the history of Marxism . . . as a sustained effort to escape the "either/or" logic of determinism'.¹⁵

Were it not for a rather special feature of it, one would have to think this argument had been concocted for a joke. But as it carries with it the accusation that I am intellectually 'dishonest', or, at least, *maybe* dishonest, I assume more serious intent. Let us, therefore, talk a little further about relations of 'expression'. It can sometimes happen that in a single phrase or gesture you suddenly see summed up—'expressed'—the whole outlook or disposition or character of a person. Just so, in one paragraph here there is captured, concentrated, the seemingly limitless arbitrariness of what has now become of the thought of Laclau and Mouffe. The two of them, unconstrained not only by what others but even by what they themselves write, discreetly refrain from mentioning that what their 'reply' terms the 'double historical logic' in Luxemburg's thought was also called, in their book, an 'irreducible dualism' and 'a double void'. How could they possibly have forgotten this when, as I think they will acknowledge, my critique did rather focus on that last phrase?¹⁶ And they tactfully decline here to say that what is now characterized as Marxism's 'sustained effort etc.' goes under the rubric, in the book—on page after page—of 'dualism', 'spurious dualism', 'the dualism of classical Marxism', 'exactly the same dualism'. And why does it? Because, according to them, the two logics, the two sides of the said dualism, are inconsistent with one another: not 'two positive and different explanatory principles' (as they put it apropos Luxemburg), but 'ultimately incoherent' (apropos Gramsci).¹⁷ True, they do not establish, they merely assert, this inconsistency, in the very manner we have just witnessed again with 'determines' and relative autonomy. Still, that is what they do assert, time and time again, and so the 'game' of frontiers is really *it* and that is why I took it to be it. It is *their* contention, not mine, that a historical-materialist framework excludes any *coherent* use by its proponents of (good) concepts like relative autonomy, hegemony, overdetermination, Luxemburgist 'spontaneity', and so on; *their* contention that it is an ineradicably 'essentialist', 'economist', 'reductionist' framework. For any logical mind persuaded by this contention and not confused by the momentary exigency of having to find *something* to say, that imposes a choice between straight, unmitigated economic determinism and whatever is thought to be the separate and opposed logic of the aforesaid (good) concepts. But this is exactly the alternative disclosed by the so-called game of frontiers. And this is precisely the reason Laclau and Mouffe have taken the 'post-Marxist' path. And then, when it is pointed out that it is a falsely polarized alternative, reposing on a caricature of historical materialism, they turn round in all injured innocence and say in effect, *by way of vindication*: but this was 'only' a caricature—a *reductio ad absurdum*—of Marxism, which we *knew* and we *said* to be more complex actually, embodying other, better logics *as well*. They 'only' neglect to observe that it is a complexity

¹⁵ WA, pp. 91–.

¹⁶ HSS, pp. 12–, PM, pp. 61, 69.

¹⁷ HSS pp. 26 (and 29), 51, 69, 99, and 13, 69.

they have condemned as incoherent: void. Void, yes indeed—right word, wrong object—and bottomless.

The character of response, then, is becoming all too plain. To the first criticism made of their book the best these writers have to offer is blank repetition of the point contested; and apart from that there is just evasion or displacement of the questions actually raised, strategic exclusion of key aspects, now of my argument, now of their own, denial of having posed a choice they manifestly have posed; and then some bluster ('God and Geras') and a touch of personal accusation. It will get no better. But already there is material enough and more that I could, were I so minded, level a charge of intellectual dishonesty of my own. I do not. Partly because I believe it to be rare—people generally deceiving themselves before 'deceiving' others—and partly because when it happens, as I suppose it sometimes does, it is impossible without close personal knowledge to know that it has. There is, in any case, a more plausible explanation for all this—to which point I will return. For now, let it suffice to say that, whatever the explanation for it, one thing is crystal clear: it is the *form* of 'making a reply' that is everything here, the quality or substance of it—nothing. To adapt a well-known aphorism concerning justice: a reply need not actually be made, but it must be seen to be made.

2. Marxists

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy unfolds a view of various Marxist thinkers which, my essay argued, is systematically impoverishing, a travesty. Two items preface what there is of a response to that argument.¹⁸ The first item is a summary redescription of the authors' project as they see it; but in the same artless spirit we just now encountered: their book sought to show that 'Marxist thought' has 'been a persistent effort . . . to distance itself from essentialism', the emergence 'internal to Marxism itself' of other, better logics. That is what their book sought to show. Not that Marxism *is* the 'essentialism' (principal, omnipresent, Laclau-Mouffian epithet of its deficiency), is the 'reductionism', 'economism' and the rest; and that *every* Marxist effort to 'distance itself' has therefore yielded for its author a dualism, whether 'irreducible' or 'spurious' or 'incoherent'. No, the 'persistent effort' and 'internal' to Marxism. We can leave behind this species of self-presentation. We have already seen its secret: suddenly and conveniently ascribing *to Marxism* what is everywhere else claimed to be logically *incompatible* with it *qua* 'essentialism' etc. My own critique, if I may say so, expressed the whole matter rather more clearly. At the very beginning of the argument that Laclau and Mouffe had produced a travesty, I wrote, 'To be absolutely precise about this: it is not that they deny all the strengths, insights, contributions of theoretical value, as they construe them, to be found in the work of Marxist *writers* . . . But such elements of value are all stipulated as being *external* to the real parameters of Marxism.'¹⁹ If this characterization is inaccurate, we are owed a reason why it is now necessary to be on a 'post-Marxist' terrain at all; why, to put the same thing differently,

¹⁸ For what follows, see WA, pp 97-9

¹⁹ PM, p 48

these various 'elements of value' in the work of Marxist writers do not show (what they do show) that not all Marxism has been 'essentialist' and reductionist; why, to turn their own equivocation right round upon the authors, Marxist thought has not indeed contained—"internal" to it—the '*anti*-essentialism' they here briefly allow that it has; why *Marxism*, then, is not made rich and current again through having so restored to it that inner wealth of which it was earlier stripped. The entire 'post-Marxist' standpoint will begin helplessly to unravel.

The second item, complementing this positive self-image, is an image of another stripe. Laclau and Mouffe express themselves amazed by my view 'that Bernstein and Sorel "abandoned" Marxism', adding: 'and in Geras this has the unmistakable connotation of betrayal'. In fact, 'abandoned' is their word and not mine, but no matter, I do say that Bernstein and Sorel rejected, or broke with, Marxism (just as the authors have now done).²⁰ There could, I suppose, be room for argument to the contrary about this. It would be interesting to see some. But, in any event, it is not a wildly eccentric view. In Bernstein's case, at least, it is the view of Peter Gay, Carl Schorske and George Lichtheim amongst other scholars of a notably different political outlook from mine. It is also, I submit, entailed by what Laclau and Mouffe themselves ever conceiving both Bernstein and Sorel.²¹ But what about 'betrayal'? The rude fact is that I say nothing whatsoever about either Bernstein or Sorel having betrayed anything. Hence: 'unmistakable connotation of'. So introduced, 'betrayal' quickly *displaces* 'abandonment'. The authors was indignant: 'What can we think about this ridiculous story of "betrayal" and "abandonment"? What would one make of a history of philosophy which claimed that Aristotle betrayed Plato . . . that Marx betrayed Hegel?' They tell us. 'We' would think that for the person who approaches things in this way 'the betrayed doctrine is an object of *aversion* . . . a religious object' (mark it again, the pejorative reference to religious belief). Further . . . 'We know the story very well: Bernstein betrayed Marx; European social-democracy betrayed the working class; the Soviet bureaucracy betrayed the revolution . . . thus, the only trustees of "Revolution" and "Science" are the small sects belonging to imaginary Internationals which . . . are permanently splitting.' I think Laclau and Mouffe may here be wanting to suggest to the reader that Geras is some kind of a Trotskyist and 'we' all know about them. It is desperate stuff.

If it is true that I am a worshipper of Marxism or relevant that I am some kind of a Trotskyist, one should be able to show how this is reflected in and vitiates, *specific* criticisms and arguments that I *in fact* direct at their book. Better still, as the product of a devout, unquestioning mind and vitiated, these criticisms and arguments should be no trouble to deal with: one could, then, just reply to (as in: answer) one or two of them, instead of throwing up one smokescreen after another.

²⁰ PM, pp. 40-1, 53, 64.

²¹ Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, New York 1962, pp. 68, 72, 143, 151; Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1903-1917*, New York 1970, pp. 17, 19; George Lichtheim, *Marxism*, London 1964, p. 290. Cf. J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London 1966, Vol. 1, p. 205—and HSS, pp. 30-1, 38-9, 41.

I mean, what, otherwise, are we to think? What I, personally, do think, is that this is testimony again to the meaning of discursive 'openness' and 'pluralism'. The most (let us just say) frontal criticism of Marxism and all its works—that is good, plain creative intellectual endeavour. But defence of Marxism, against this same criticism and because it is judged to be (let us just say) unconvincing, *this* can only be sectarianism and piety. Another very well-known story: non-Marxists can, but Marxists never do, adopt their opinions and judgements on a reflective, questioning, considered basis. It confirms—in a different register, so to say—the justness of the charge of travesty. For, closure and chiasm, fixity and reduction, 'essentialism' *ad nauseam* and more of the same: how *could* Marxism now be entertained by a thoughtful, open intellect, be defended any other way than piously?

As for 'betrayal': although it has been overused, I believe this notion *is* sometimes apt, in political as in personal affairs. People can betray comrades or supporters; or their own stated principles. I think an excellent example of the latter case to be, precisely, the conduct of many 'anti-militarist' social-democratic leaders at the outbreak of the First World War. But in intellectual matters, in the assessment of theoretical approaches or paradigms—their strengths, their problems and their failures—the question of betrayal is neither here nor there. Betrayal of a *theory*, a conception of history or society, this is indeed a nonsense; and so it would be to think that Bernstein or anybody else had 'betrayed Marx'—or *Marxism*. I do not. What has possibly confused these writers is a view of *themselves* imputed to me on the basis that my tone of address was a sharp rather than warm, congenial one. Difficult as it may be for them to accept these, there are other reasons for that than the break with Marxism as such. Ex-Marxist opinion and criticism, also, can be such as to command the respect of Marxists. Where it is of a measured and serious kind, they have a responsibility to try to meet it in like spirit. More: it may have to be acknowledged as identifying some weakness(es) within Marxist thought in need of being made good, since there are enough of those. (But *which* social theory lacks them?)²² By the same token, however, there is no obligation on Marxists to be impressed by any old collection of facile exaggerations and stale anti-Marxist prejudices. That is—once again—harder to respect, and so is the relentless diminishing of a vital intellectual tradition into a shrunken, parodied remnant of itself: harder to respect, coming from anyone; hardest, coming from people who *might* have been expected to know better. If any concept of betrayal applies here, it is only betrayal of the intellectual standards proper to serious enquiry and debate. Laclau and Mouffe may not be able to agree with these, my reasons, much less find them welcome, but that's the way it goes. One puts one's work in the public domain and then sees.

²² For a discussion of just *now* such weakness, see my 'Marxism and Moral Advocacy', *Manchester Papers in Politics*, Department of Government, University of Manchester, 1987, and my conclusion to 'The Controversy About Marx and Justice', *New Left Review* 150, March/April 1985, pp. 84–5.

The Stigma of 'Essentialism'

From the friendly self-description and the indignation the authors proceed to what they style a 'point by point' reply to my main criticisms of their treatment of Marxist thought. Their first—which purports to respond to my first—point here is that I have accused them of 'choosing *at random* a group of Marxist thinkers' (my emphasis), and this they have not done, for they were narrating an intellectual *history*. They certainly make life easy for themselves. I gave a detailed account of the intellectual history they narrated, displaying how, for every Marxist thinker there treated, effectively *the same thing* had been construed: namely, *some* (smaller or greater) amount of headway, against the thinker's Marxist economism and 'essentialism', towards understanding the world (in terms of contingency and what have you); but always failure ultimately to leave the said deficiencies behind, and hence a dualism. Finding the standards of demonstration deployed unimpressive, I commented, with satiric but not at all frivolous intent, that it was a simple game; in which 'you take some Marxist, any Marxist will do . . .' and then go through the one reductive exegetical routine. My point was not that the authors *had chosen* Marxists haphazardly. A line which runs from Luxemburg and Kautsky through Plekhanov, Labriola, the Austro-Marxists, Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci, Althusser—that is not just any random bunch of Marxists (which is why I spoke, in introducing my summary of this, of 'the treatment meted out here seriatim to a number of Marxism's more important thinkers'). My point was that, with the intellectual methods in question, it makes no difference, *whichever Marxist thinker you choose* you can effortlessly 'show' the same thing.²³

I *then* went on to identify the reason for this. We are afforded no demonstration by Laclau and Mouffe of how, in the writers treated, Marxist categories have been inflated into 'essences'; thus no demonstration that these actually are 'essentialist'. Bare use of the categories is proof, *pro facto*, of 'essentialism'. To be the latter's victim—or perpetrator—it suffices that you be a Marxist, irrespective of whether or not you reduce everything to class or economic, or any other singular, significance. For, 'essentialism' functions doubly in the discourse of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*: as concept and as stigma—and these two are, so to put it, dislocated. As concept, it is roughly given by the notion of 'expressive totality'. It is monism, reduction of apparent complexity to the underlying simplicity of an essence, explanation of the whole by reference to one part, and so on. As stigma, however, 'essentialism' is compatible with *not* explaining everything by reduction to one essence. It is merely some categorical discrimination, within social 'plurality', between more and less important. As I pointed out, the authors not only do *not* show that for their chosen Marxists class, say, *was* all-explanatory, they *do* show that it *was not* all-explanatory (the basis, this, for 'essentialism's' companion stigma, 'dualism'). That does not deter them in the slightest from the charge of 'essentialism': a sort

²³ WA, p. 99, and PM, pp. 48, 52-6. I have left aside here a useless quibble by the authors that their main focus was not economism but 'essentialism'—as if their history of Marxism had been at all neglectful of the first or this criticism of mine had failed to mention the second.

of littler 'essentialism' in which everything is explained by the one essence, except for what isn't. It is a bit like some mediaeval tests for witchcraft.

But to this whole argument Laclau and Mouffe have nothing to say, a rather curious silence in a 'point by point' reply. The fact is—and as I argued next—they themselves involuntarily show (but now as in: display) the genuine meaning of essentialism: promotion of a concept or schema to the point where it is just omnipresent in the real, despite every evidence to the contrary. Such is their own account of Marxism, history or no; a self-enclosed, unfalsifiable theoretical matrix.²⁴

Their second point, then—which responds to my fourth—is this: 'we are supposed to have contradicted ourselves by saying that Marxism is monist and dualist at the same time. But there is no contradiction here: what we asserted is that Marxism becomes dualist as a result of the failure of monism. A theory that starts by being pluralist would run no risk of becoming dualist.' That is the whole thing, undiminished, from beginning to end. At least this time Laclau and Mouffe have come up with an original sort of response to criticism: not just a repetition of the position criticized, but a repetition, as near as makes no difference, *of the critic himself*. As any reader can verify with but a moment's effort, what is proffered here as a reply virtually paraphrases a section of my criticism, the questioned being simply given back as the answer. I myself set out this logic of theirs: that *because* it was monist whilst the world was not, Marxism has had to be dualist in order to cope.²⁵ But this, which they take as a finishing, is only the starting line for any half-way serious reply. For, I went on to argue that it is a perverse logic. It rests on merely *ruling* Marxism to be always-already monist, in every one of its guises and lineages; and then, by the process of impoverishment I protested against, discounting all conceptual matter testifying otherwise—the likes of 'spontaneity', political initiative, hegemony, relative autonomy—as foreign to its nature, and so the other half of a dualism. The question which my critique clearly posed is: but what, then, leaving aside cruder versions of it, *establishes* Marxism as monist-and-hence-also-dualist rather than just complex and thus not monist and consequently not dualist either?²⁶ Or rather than pluralist-from-the-start and, as such, in 'no risk of becoming dualist'? (I deliberately take the chance of being misconstrued here: I do not intend, obviously, a Laclau-Mouffian but an 'ordered' type of pluralism, a conception of 'primacy', as set out both above and in the earlier essay). This question the authors do not even try to answer. Without an answer to it, their account of Marxism is exactly as cogent as the argument that all people are vegetarians, most of them, though, incomplete vegetarians with a 'dualist' diet.

Methods of Construction

The sole—and intellectually unsatisfactory—basis of this dualist rendition of Marxism is the one I went on to identify, and to which Laclau

²⁴ PM, pp. 56–7

²⁵ WA, p. 99; PM, p. 58.

²⁶ PM, p. 63

and Mouffe's next point is addressed. I suggested that it is only because they read the history of Marxism teleologically, because they treat certain concepts there as anticipating themselves, that they can represent these, retrospectively endowed now with a particle of their own thought, to be incompatible with historical materialism—as their thought *is* incompatible with it. To this they have responded by saying that there is no other proper way than theirs to proceed. History 'is always history of the present', it is constructed by 'questioning the past from the perspective of the present'; 'there is not an *in-itself* of history, but rather a multiple refraction of it, depending on the traditions from which it is interrogated.'²⁷ This is, again, a side-stepping of the issue by assertion of an uncontentious but irrelevant truth. Or else it is something worse. Yes, the historian or social philosopher is not a blank sheet and so forth. Thus, if there are some today interested in notions of justice, they are entitled to reread Marx's work in the light of that interest and even to try to show that he was moved by such considerations himself though his texts overtly deny it. But they do, then, have to *show* this: by reference, precisely, to the texts, and their contexts, any independent evidence there might be about Marx's intentions, and so on. One cannot make any kind of history one wants out of the present and its perspective. In practice (as always with this philosophical tendency) Laclau and Mouffe argue in exactly the manner of everybody else: as if their account of Marxism could be assessed by reference to *what it is an account of*. In that case, to establish a dualism here they need to demonstrate the logical *inconsistency* between, for example, Gramscian hegemony and structural-Marxist concepts of class; or between Leninist political alliance, or Trotskyist permanent revolution, or Luxemburg's mass strike arguments, or Althusserian overdetermination, and the same. But they do not and, I contend, they cannot, because there is none. They merely generate an appearance of inconsistency by denaturing these concepts and arguments into shades of another, future 'discursivity'. To react to this criticism by saying in effect, 'But that is our perspective, what else can we do?', is empty. One could do what others have to do, meet criticism with argument and evidence, give reasons, if there are any, why the account of Marxism produced from within this perspective deserves to be taken seriously, *as* an account of Marxism—reasons beyond the bare fact of the perspective *being* a perspective.

Or . . . is the perspective indeed just sufficient unto itself? Are we dealing, in other words, with what the authors elsewhere in their text allege to be 'an invention of the fundamentalists', that is, with a relativism?²⁸ Quite probably. But it is impossible (as always with this philosophical tendency) to pin down, because by its nature it is—endlessly—equivocal about its nature, right down to the very deepest layers of thought. Hence, no 'in-itself of history, but . . . a multiple refraction of it'. Of what, though? Let them have this as they please. If their account of Marxism *is* sufficient unto itself, there is nothing for the three of us to discuss here. They are welcome to that particular kind of dark security. But for my part, I will still do my best to persuade

²⁷ PM, p. 59; WF, pp. 99–100.

²⁸ WA, p. 85.

those who accept such terms that there is a gulf between Marxism as it was and is and the Marxism Laclau and Mouffe have 'constructed'.

We now have another insight into the methods of this construction. Their book maintains that it is a 'logic of the symbol' ('the overflowing of the signifier by the signified') that governs Luxemburg's conception of the mass strike and its notion of an interaction between the political and the economic. I dispute this. It is an ungrounded intrusion of their preoccupations upon hers. They claim I have provided no *argument*, merely an 'enumeration'. They refer thus to my detailed break-down of her ideas, in thirteen separate points. As it is my contention that they do violence to these ideas, how else should I argue the case than by setting out her view of the mass strike in as much detail as space will allow, so that readers then have the material—textual *evidence*—to judge for themselves as to the cogency and balance of the disputed interpretation? But Laclau and Mouffe have a different approach to these things. They 'would not disagree', you see, with my mere 'enumeration': it does not contradict anything in their analysis. But, strange to relate, from the experience of revolution, they then pick out for explicit mention that *and only that* which neatly fits their 'symbolic' interpretation: to wit, that a strike over wages can in certain circumstances symbolize opposition to the system as a whole; just as 'rose' can symbolize 'love'! Everything *else* in the enumeration, some dozen points, all other 'logics' or causalities—the strengthening of organizations by involvement of new layers of the working class, troops shooting striking workers, the effects of socialist agitation, the use of newly-won political rights in furthering trade-union work—they prefer not to talk about, much less explain for their readers. Thus can one aspect of a complex conception be transmuted into its central 'mechanism'. And thus can you reply to criticism by saying exactly the same thing again without addition.²⁹

That much on Luxemburg. But on the other Marxists whose treatment I criticized, there is even less. On Althusser: silence. On Lenin: silence. On Trotsky: ritual enunciation of the word 'theoretical' (italicized four times within a paragraph) to cope with the fact that the notion of relative autonomy is central to a text in which, it was alleged, he had simply fallen back on the greenness-of-life argument. One or two sentences isolated from their place in that text suffice to validate his reliance on the greenness of life. But half a dozen formulations of 'relative autonomy' in the same text (merely a brief reply to a critic) and the whole comparative historical discussion of the Russian and Western European states which supports them in his primary writings on this question: not, by Laclau and Mouffe's fine sense of proportion, a *theoretical* analysis. And on Bernstein, Sorel and Gramsci (joint subjects of two memorable paragraphs of untrammelled discursive play)? Silence.³⁰

So, to the second criticism made of their book the best the authors have to offer are a couple more pure repetitions, unsullied by the strain of persuasive reasoning; and apart from that there are just some significant

²⁹ PM, pp. 59–62, WA, pp. 100–1; in reference to HSS pp. 8–14.

³⁰ PM, pp. 62–65 (and HSS, p. 71 for the two paragraphs), WA, p. 100.

gaps in a 'point by point' reply; responses hardly better than the gaps since they succeed in either missing or dodging the point of *each* of the four points they pretend to respond to; a manifestly tendentious and self-serving characterization of the sort of account of Marxism *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* contains; and then a little piece of demagogic attitudinizing.

3. Voids

My critique takes some care pointing out a deficiency at the heart of Laclau and Mouffe's social theory: in the notion of 'hegemonic articulation'. Unable, in their own terms, to conceive the identities articulated by a political discourse as either 'elements' or 'moments' (i.e., as constituted, respectively, outside or inside the given discourse) without falling thereby into an 'essentialism', they settle for them being something in between. I showed, however, what this means in practice: a systematic conceptual prevarication. Against the idea of a class delineation of identities, the *internal* (the constitutive power of the articulating political discourse) is urged, and all such external 'fixity' dismissed in favour of radical unfixity' and the like; as if the internal was just everything. But then against the articulating discourse being rendered into a closed totality, and in favour of 'pluralism', the *external* (independently and separately constituted identities) is appealed to and so some external fixity allowed after all. I argued: first, that there are no clear or consistent criteria of usage here, only usages of convenience, whether of fixity/unfixity, interiority/exteriority etc.; second, that the critique of Marxist assumptions in this matter is entirely vitiated because it *depends* on one side of the prevarication (that there is no external fixity) holding firm—Marxism has lived from the beginning with identities constituted *in part* politically; and third, that the conception is nearly vacuous, since it enables one to explain nothing about the relative fates of different political discourses except by falling back on other, including 'economistic' Marxist, categories. All of this is laid out over several pages—composing one sixth of the essay to which they belong.³¹ I report Laclau and Mouffe's views in detail, the core of what they positively put on offer. I develop these criticisms of them: methodically, step by step, in terms, I believe, of some clarity, and with substantiating quotation and full referencing. I engage at length with their ideas. The two of them respond more economically. They say nothing.

4. Norms

Then there is the matter, also, of the normative vacuity of their work. What are the grounds, I asked, for their usage of 'progressive'? What is the normative basis for *any* determinate political direction?—when the categories of progress, objective interests, 'the anthropological assumption of a "human nature"', 'universal discourses', have all been rejected. Laclau and Mouffe begin with a profession of pluralist virtue: if it is 'apodictic certainty'—as does not admit of any 'discussion'—that is being asked for, then there can be no such normative foundation. But there is still the 'possibility of reasoning politically and of preferring,

³¹ See PM, pp. 7–75

for a variety of reasons, certain political positions to others.' Never mind about a certainty beyond discussion. As an 'epigone of Marxist orthodoxy',³² I would have, of course, to want that sort of thing. But, actually, reasons would be fine, ordinary discussable reasons, a 'variety' of them. What are they?

We get here, first, a brief discourse on humanism. The authors do not deny the validity of humanism's values, they say, but merely insist that these have been constructed over a long history. They prefer it, then. The paragraph devoted to it, however, is exclusively given to talking about the 'emergence' of humanism, this 'process of multiple construction', the 'various discursive surfaces where it has taken place', and so forth. But *that it was constructed* cannot itself be a reason for preferring it. As I do not have to tell Laclau and Mouffe, everything of this sort is constructed; hence also the 'racism, sexism, class discrimination' by which, they observe, humanism is threatened.³³ Perhaps they think that referring thus—from the outside—to the production of humanist values in positive terms sufficiently acquits them of any obligation to explicate reasons. But there is a small difficulty with this. For, *the* value they single out so to refer to is the humanist concept of 'Man', no more, no less: the '“human being”, without qualification'. They do not trouble to explain how one such concept of 'man' can be adjudged better than another once a *human nature* has been excluded, just what in that case *are* the reasons for preferring it; how, indeed, you can *think* a concept of 'man'—from the inside—without 'any anthropological foundation'. The contradiction is dazzling and merely generalizes that which I had already drawn attention to: their appeal to a notion of *human* capacities, but without any human nature. If ever there was a threadbare orthodoxy of the Left, whether Marxist, structuralist or 'post'-either of them, supported intellectually today by nothing but the force of constant reiteration, it is this denial of a human nature. Having spent the best part of three years on a painstaking argument, reason by itemized reason, against it, I do not think too highly of little homilies about certitude and reasoning from people whose own level of argument on human nature is the 'presumably a gift from heaven' one. For the rest, that the authors' outlook might draw determinate normative content from an indirect reliance on assumptions they overtly reject, I already pointed out. The resulting self-contradiction and the 'indirection' are now given a new—and extraordinary—expression: external endorsement of humanist discourse about 'man' in a discourse about discourses, because 'man' in a presentation of reasons is inadmissible, having been expelled under another name.

And we get here, second, a recapitulation of Laclau and Mouffe's notion of the democratic revolution. It is another discourse about discourse. For, if you search this recapitulation for what it is they might construe as supplying reasons for the (democratic) political position they prefer, all you will find is the following: that the relation of worker to capitalist is not intrinsically antagonistic but only rendered so in terms of democratic discourses of equality and rights. This is an enhanced

³² WA, p. 81.

³³ Why do they not say 'racism, sexism, classism' here?

argumentative mode: pure unenlarged repetition, as several times before, but now without even signalling that there has been a criticism—as though the repeated just needed no defence; rather than masquerading as the defence of itself. The capitalist-worker relation may well be transformed into an antagonism (and, thereby, an oppression etc.) in the terms of one discourse. But in the terms of another it is not; and in the terms of yet others there is virtually no relation, as I showed; that cannot be construed as antagonistic in this way. So the notion of antagonism as such yields no specific normative orientation. We still need reasons for preferring this discourse to others. Now, try to present equality *as a reason*—and not mere object in a ‘sociology of discourse’—in a way that depends not at all on any, even minimal conception of human nature, or of basic human needs or human qualities; nor at all on principles of fairness or justice of quite general, that is, universal, scope. The discourse of equality and *human* rights is a ‘universal discourse’ if such there be at all; of the sort Laclau and Mouffe aver has had its day. They are utterly bereft here, by their own facile dismissals deprived of anything which could be given as a reason.³⁴

What we have before us is not so much an answer to criticism as an abject debate: a discourse *about* reasons, incapable of articulating any; a theory of discourses effectively speechless, unable to conduct one.

5. Essences

The cause of it, this moral vacuum, this strange, evasive, second-order talk, is plain: anything Laclau and Mouffe might venture as a reason directly out of their own mouths would be an ‘essentialism’. The cause is their prodigal use of this last notion. Objective interests: an ‘essence’. Human nature: an ‘essence’ (and so, it follows, *essential* human needs). Progress: an ‘essence’. Marxist class: an ‘essence’—and relations of production: an ‘essence’. The party: an ‘essence’. Revolution: an ‘essence’. Society: an ‘essence’. Separately constituted ‘elements’ of the social: ‘essences’. . . Without an effort, and some criteria, of discrimination between organizing theoretical concepts and genuine reductionisms, this becomes a blight on serious thought, an obscurantism. One can maintain that there is a human nature, to return for a moment to that, without making it the source and centre of all things, without denying the complexity of the social, etc. It has a certain, not altogether unimportant, explanatory role, that is all. And even categories with a very important explanatory role have to be shown to be more than just this to establish an ‘essentialism’. They are indispensable to purposeful enquiry. But Laclau and Mouffe find reductionist ‘essences’ everywhere, even where there are explanatory categories they *know* to be less than exhaustive for the thinker who uses them. There is not a social theorist, Marxist or otherwise, of whom it could not be ‘shown’, up to standards equivalent to theirs, that his or her thought was ‘essentialist’—though not fully so and hence dualist as well. I have already proposed the gist of such a demonstration for their own thought. This entire line of criticism and questions, however, a clear presence throughout my essay—why discourse, all-pervasive, is less of an ‘essence’ than class;

³⁴ See, for this section, PM, pp. 75–8, 82, WA, pp. 101–3 (and HSS, pp. 3, 116–7, 152–3, 181, 188)

why what Bernstein continued to allow to Marxist categories sufficed to land him with a dualism, when the authors can fall back on these at need and that is all right—they have chosen to meet with another quiet absence in their own.³⁵

6. Politics

I drew attention to a tendency of the authors to write of Marxism as though democratic concerns and principles were just foreign to it: to conflate the tradition as a whole with its authoritarian forms, so discounting its other, democratic heritage. This is, of course, a quite widespread tendency with non-(and especially ex-)Marxists, but it is by no means universal amongst them and of interest, therefore, coming from writers who profess a residual linkage to their Marxist past. Anyhow, I took issue with a way of talking about Marxism that effectively equates it with Stalinism. Laclau and Mouffe's 'reply' to this is rather special. Has Geras not heard of Stalinism? they ask; and the one-party system, press censorship, other such things? It may be wondered how such a 'reply' is possible in the circumstances. Easy. They report one sentence from my argument: that I—in common with very many other Marxists—'take it as axiomatic that socialism must be democratic'; treat this as meaning that I hold the relation between socialism and democracy to pose no problem; and they are off. What about Stalinism? What about tanks? It is not axiomatic for anyone 'who does not live on Mars'; or 'in Gerasland' . . . and so on. Nothing, not in my text, not in theirs, no sense of care or just plain decorum, restrains them from the exigency of the instant; the quick, cheap riposte—the most fatuous vulgarity. They just ignore: the whole context of these words of mine they bring to the reader's notice; the fact that it is by contrast, *explicitly*, with Stalinism—and with 'the forms and pretensions of "actually existing socialism"'—that I emphasize the democratic heritage of Marxism; the fact that but two pages earlier in their own text, it was belief in the Soviet bureaucracy's 'betrayal' of the revolution I was being berated for, so that I did know about Stalinism, *then*. Nothing of this matters. How you 'construct' things is how they are. On the basis of one sentence I am representable as thinking what I do not. That releases our authors from the need of any genuine reply, in particular from having to decide either to defend or to correct the one-sided picture of Marxism and democracy they have presented.³⁶

Laclau and Mouffe will have trouble finding, in my critique of them or in anything else I have written, a real piece of evidence that I think the relation between socialism and democracy is unproblematic; which is why they are obliged to construct one. They will find, rather, an abiding concern with questions of socialist democracy, and an understanding of the necessity of socialist pluralism that goes back a long way before 1985: formulated unambiguously a decade earlier; learned partly, it is true, from sources outside Marxism, but also from discourses within it; basing myself on which I some good while ago engaged critically with, to reject, the problematic of *the* party (without a single reference, it

³⁵ PM, pp. 47–8, 56–8, 64, 70–71, 74–5, 78 and *passim*.

³⁶ PM, pp. 79, 82; WA, p. 101 and n. 28 pp. 103–4.

should be said, to 'essentialism').³⁷ And this was precisely the point of my statement they so traduce: that a socialism that is democratic is not only thinkable, but has been much thought, within Marxism, has been a central aspiration, goal and project there, an integral, continuous strand. Any account of the tradition that suggests otherwise is worthless. That is not to say there are no problems for contemporary Marxism in this area: relating, especially, to the need for more precise theory about the institutional shape, the regulative norms, rights and procedures, of a socialist democracy; for a prospective map of the constitutional order of feasible socialism. But Marxism has no special burden to bear here vis-à-vis other currents of socialist thought. This is a common question for them—is all, a rather large one. Some sobriety before it, a certain fair-mindedness and balance in assessing the relative records of different socialist traditions, would not come amiss from authors who, as I observed, themselves offer virtually nothing towards such a map, repeating all the while, 'radical democracy'. This, the main point in my comment on their views on democracy, they prefer, yet once again, to step around, in order to focus on a single prefatory remark interpreted in their own inimitably free way. Except . . . that they now offer for our edification a formula—'the consolidation and democratic reform of the liberal state'—whose radicalism would scarcely embarrass the Rt. Hon. David Owen.³⁸

What is it, though, that keeps reproducing this (at every turn, every point), the nimble side-step? According to Laclau and Mouffe, I represent them as seeing communism and fascism as identical 'types of society'. But that is not what I said. Which was: that they use 'totalitarianism' as denoting something *common* to a politics of the left and fascism, and whose source, with respect to the left, is located within the logic of Marxist theory itself, because within 'every attempt to establish a definitive suture'. Responding that communism and fascism are not identical types of society is child's play. It spares them, again, having either to defend or to amend the thesis that totalitarianism is inherent in the very nature of Marxist thought. This raises an interesting question. Their essay of 'reply', though it withdraws not one of the *specific* disparaging theses about Marxism with which *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is thick, has taken on, oddly, a certain greater friendliness of tone towards it, at least where vague, unfocused *generalities* are concerned. Laclau and Mouffe talk at the end, for example, about 'giv[ing] to Marxism its theoretical dignity'. They ought, then, to say whether this is or is not the dignity of having been responsible for show trials, mass purges, the Gulag and the rest.³⁹

Diversions (I) – Existence

No reader of my essay could possibly mistake what its main concerns were: to contest the authors' rendition of Marxism and criticize the

³⁷ See *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, pp. 183–5, 188–90, 193 and *passim*, 'Classical Marxism and Proletarian Representation', *New Left Review* 123, January/February 1981, and *Literature of Revolution*, Verso, London 1986 (in which that essay is reprinted), pp. xii ff and the essays in Part II.

³⁸ WA, p. 103.

³⁹ PM, p. 81, WA, pp. 103–6.

social theory they now prefer. This is thirty-eight pages of forty, 95 per cent of the body of the text. The other two pages were given to a certain matter of ontology: whether objects exist external to thought. After some introductory remarks, Laclau and Mouffe begin by devoting fully 40 per cent of their response to those two pages. Why? The issue addressed there is an important one, doubtless. But in view of their failure to reply to anything else; not even the pretence of a reply, just complete silence, on two of the principal criticisms (concerning elements/moments and subordination/antagonism/oppression) of the social philosophy they offer; one cannot help wondering about what really governs the sense of proportion here. In any case, on *this* question they are not short of what to say. We are taken through the philosophers, authorities ancient and modern: Wittgenstein, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend, Richard Rorty, Aristotle, Plato, Berkeley, Hegel, Charles Taylor, W. T. Stace, Marx, Heidegger, Derrida, Saussure, W. V. Quine and Nietzsche. And where do we arrive? Just exactly where I said we were when we started: the authors formally affirm the existence of objects external to thought, but the rest of what they say cancels this out, robs it of any theoretical weight. For, once you try to give some content to these objects, you are dealing with their 'being' rather than their 'existence' and being is discourse-specific, discourse-relative. You cannot say anything *about* what exists outside thought, only that things do. I engage merely with the argument.⁴⁰

But racking up a couple of silences of my own now in return, I will not be discussing: a) Whether Laclau and Mouffe are philosophical 'idealists' in the *trav* meaning. If they want not to be that, who am I to quibble over a word? b) What could have motivated the patronizing dissertation—and its companions—that a football is only a football 'within a system of socially constructed rules'; as though I had imagined there to be some pre- or extra-social footballs, just primordially such.

Let us take, however, stones. If there were no human beings, the authors say, 'those objects that we call stones would be there nonetheless; but they would not be "stones"'—because of the absence of languages classifying and distinguishing them. Why the scare-quotes? The *word* 'stones', its meaning, cultural associations, human uses of actual stone, etc., would not be there. But if the objects we call stones would be there, then stones would be there, because they are the common referent of the expressions 'those objects we call stones' and 'stones'. Set that aside. If the objects we *call* stones would exist, would any of their properties with them? Such as make them a different kind of entity from, say, the one we call water, and such as would prevent what we call a bird from what we call drinking the first but not the second? If there is an affirmative here—that stones (for short) and water and birds would be differentiated by their properties even in the absence of discourse and so of classification—then part of what some philosophers call the being of objects seems to be right in there from the beginning with their existence. And if not, you cannot speak intelligibly about what exists outside thought *at all*: about inherent properties, what *was* the case in the prehistory of humankind. Existence has been emptied

⁴⁰ For this section, see WA, pp. 82–92, PM, pp. 65–7.

of all content to the benefit of being-discourse. It is easy to see why relativism could seem like 'a false problem' from within this perspective. Existence, so emptied, can be no external control for different versions of being, and the hope of any such control is misguided.

Now, reconsider this proposition: 'Subjects cannot . . . be the origin of social relations—not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible—as all "experience" depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility.' I impugned the logic of it: it simply discounts one condition of experience (powers) on the grounds of there being another (discourse).⁴¹ To the criticism that they here effectively annul the 'conditions of possibility' of discourse itself, Laclau and Mouffe respond by arguing that it is 'meaningless', 'absurd', to speak about 'the conditions of possibility of the being of discourse'. But I spoke of the conditions of possibility not of the being of discourse but of discourse, period. Do any such conditions *exist*? Such as natural powers, the biological make-up of humanity, a certain kind of brain? Laclau and Mouffe cannot say. They cannot say 'yes' without, again, putting a bit of what they call being back into what they call existence. But if such conditions do not exist, we will have to say all of nature is a discursive construction. *This* is what the two of them in fact do say. They say: 'natural facts are also discursive facts'—for the 'simple' reason that 'the idea (I) of nature' is historically constructed. And I say: this (like every) relativism is based on obfuscating the distinction Althusserians used to make between the real object and—the idea of it—the object of knowledge.

One other matter here. Forbearing to treat the two 'constructions' as on level terms, I take an earthquake to be a natural phenomenon and not an expression of the wrath of God; calling the latter construction a superstition. The authors opine on this account that I regard myself as 'a functionary of truth', an embodiment of 'the Absolute Spirit'.⁴² I shall consider in turn the possibilities that this is not a serious argument and that it is. The grounds for taking it as unserious are that Laclau and Mouffe themselves plainly do not regard religious faith as an adequate basis for forming any kind of view about the world; which is why they can belittle the notion of objective interests or a human nature with 'chiliasm', 'heaven', 'God'; and me as a 'worshipper'. But when I say what they on some level also believe—and which has nothing to do, for me, with claims to absolute knowledge, transparency and so forth, and everything to do with what in the present state of our knowledge we have the best evidence for thinking—then we get this 'functionary of truth' stuff. It is the stuff not of argument at all, stuff only for touching up an image of Geras which this whole 'reply' is rather keen to establish, for want of a single argument of substance. One can only reflect, once more, on whether there are limits of *any* kind on the discursive 'patterns' these writers will permit themselves. Geras, it seems, must *not* voice the sort of assumptions about religious belief with which Laclau and Mouffe *do* scoff at others, including Geras—and

⁴¹ PM, p. 68–9 (and HSS, p. 115)

⁴² See WA, n. 17 pp. 89–90

do even here, in these lines where they so admonish him. For, as what does Geras see himself? Why, as an embodiment of the Absolute Spirit!

I now take the argument seriously, on the grounds that if the authors themselves take their discursive philosophy seriously, it is hard to see what reason they could have for differentiating in terms of truth value between the two 'constructions' of the earthquake and dismissing one of them as a superstition. Just two alternative discursive constructions of 'being', then. Here I pose a different question. How far are they willing to go in this direction? For, you see, you can say not only that an earthquake is an expression of the wrath of God, but also that AIDS is; or that famines, widespread poverty, are. We might regard the first, in that case, as due punishment rather than the consequence of a non-moralizing virus, and give prayer as the best way of dealing with the second. Laclau and Mouffe will not go this far. Why not?

Diversions (II) – Language

I did not mince my words in saying what I thought of the quality of the ideas and arguments in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Its authors disapprove, complaining that my essay belongs to a genre of denunciation. They invite their readers to decide what to think of me for 'such language'.⁴³ I bring this rejoinder to a conclusion with a few observations on the matter. First, as to my denouncing them, I say the opposite is true. I engaged *with their ideas*, arguing with these in considerable detail and over a space of more than twenty thousand words. They may not like the result of that engagement but no author has a right to expect only favourable results. They, on the other hand, as the foregoing demonstrates, have not done me the same courtesy: of responding squarely to the actual arguments I put forward. The complaint about denunciation is merely part of their effort to deflect attention away from the balance of *argument*, with an image which is itself purely denunciatory: epigone, denouncer, functionary, worshipper. This image, some well chosen silences, a lot of intellectual wriggling and evasion, are made to stand in where the (harder) activity of responsible advocacy should be. Laclau and Mouffe make a bad mistake here, just trading on the stupidity of the reader—as though there were nothing outside their present discourse against which it could be gauged.

Second, as to the language itself which they complain of, I am disinclined, on further reflection and in the light of their 'reply', either to withdraw or to temper a single one of the epithets I used of their book. Indeed, nothing testifies more clearly to the aptness of those, nothing more clearly to the nature and intellectual standards of that book, than the poverty of what has now been produced in its defence. What words *are* apt to describe an intellectual approach which, criticized for posing the spurious alternative, *a* or *c*, when there is another possibility, *b*, responds by simply changing the alternative and explaining, 'you see, we do not say either *p* or *r*, because in fact we think *q*'?⁴⁴ Which insists on a meaning for 'determination' that leaves no choice but

⁴³ WA, p. 81

⁴⁴ This is the structure of the 'reply' dealt with in 1 (i) above

between the most rigid economic determinism and unqualified plurality and—in the next breath!—charges a critic with dishonesty for saying that this is the kind of choice the approach imposes?⁴⁵ Which defends itself against the criticism of having distorted Marxism through the lens of its own preoccupations by appeal to the fact that its way of looking at Marxism is a way of looking at it? Which endorses (a discourse containing) the humanist concept of ‘man’, having rejected the anthropological assumption of a human nature? Which asks, has he heard of Stalinism?, of someone who says that there is another Marxist tradition *than* Stalinism? Which fends off the question of the conditions of possibility of discourse by calling it a meaningless question? ‘Obscurantism’, ‘absence . . . of all sense of reasonable constraint’: that seems fair. And so does ‘theoretically profligate, dissolute’; because such, I submit, is what we are faced with here, a kind of licentiousness in the realm of ideas. It has to be one of the more grotesque ironies of the recent history of socialist thought that the authors of all this are unembarrassed to pin upon themselves the badge of ‘obstinate rigour’.⁴⁶

I, for my part, therefore, now invite the reader to consider this question. How is it possible for two people, responding to criticism of *their own* work—for, who has a stronger interest than they in seeing the import of such criticism?—to contrive to miss the point not just of one or another, but of virtually every, argument put to them, piling evasion upon evasion, pure repetition upon pure silence, self-contradiction upon irrelevance, with never so much as one decent answer in what is supposed to be a reply? For reasons earlier stated, I do not impugn the intellectual honesty of these two people. I think there is a simpler explanation. They are just short of genuine answers. Unable to meet the criticisms made of their book, they recklessly thrash about for anything, more or less whatever, that might preserve a certain appearance, a certain external *form*.

Third: it is possible, of course, to express oneself more gently, tactfully, than I did and now do again. In most circumstances there is a lot to be said for that: for friendlier, less adversarial norms of debate. But I have to say that I did, and do, not judge the circumstances of this particular debate to call for any such emollience, my own perception of what was *casus belli* being rather different from the one implied by Laclau and Mouffe’s expression of grievance in this matter. They would like to have it that there they were, two conscientious scholars quietly ploughing their own furrow, only to be viciously set upon by a rude sectarian and fundamentalist. By such injured naivete I confess myself unimpressed. Over pages and pages—and some current back-peddalling by them about this notwithstanding—the authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* systematically rubbish the Marxist tradition, with their

⁴⁵ See, in turn, (i) and (ii) above.

⁴⁶ WA, p. 79. Even in citing the language of which they complain, Laclau and Mouffe cannot be bothered to be too accurate: they leave off the qualifier, ‘theoretically’, from the adjectives, ‘profligate, dissolute’, and disconnect these from the elaboration of them that is their direct sequel in my text—viz., ‘more or less any ideological combination or disjunction being permitted here, without regard for normal considerations of logic, of evidence or of due proportion’—part of which they then give *separately*, so allowing the impression that I have, perhaps, charged them with some sort of moral depravity. See PFL, p. 43.

battery of 'isms', from 'essentialism' through 'monism' and 'dualism' to 'stagism' and 'classism' and 'apriorism' and a good few more, and with 'suture' and 'closure' and 'chiliasm' and 'fixity' and 'transparency', repeated again and again, relentlessly, conjoined, recombined, permuted.⁴⁷ It is hard to think of another book so rich, and at the same time so ugly, with a terminology of error; with such an ease in the use of it, on the flimsiest pretexts (wild antitheses and exegeses, for which no serious word can now be found as a defence) and in a way that just mocks the trouble, the worry, the difficulty, of mature intellectual work. Such is good enough for the wholesale depreciation of Marxist thought. But themselves subjected to a forthright language of riposte, Laclau and Mouffe cry foul, not very nice.

Democracy and Knowledge

Fourth, their complaint, and the image of myself it is designed to feed, are part of a more general theme, a double and mischievous obfuscation, which should be brought out into the light. Marxism and Marxists, for aspiring to cognitive objectivity, are held to lay claim to certainty, absolute knowledge, transparent access to truth and so on; whereas the theory of discourses, being (what I call) a cognitive relativism, is supposedly undogmatic, open and pluralist, *democratic*. This view of things simply conflates the aspiration to knowledge—shared by Marxism with the mainstream traditions deriving from the Enlightenment—with notions of intellectual finality and infallibility. But unlike faith or dogma, genuine knowledge is always provisional, subject to revision in the light of new information and evidence, needing periodically to be restructured, fallible; open therefore to 'pluralist' discussion and criticism, yet at the same time, pending possible rebuttal or revision, *knowledge* so far as we have managed to get. The aspiration, and all claims, to knowledge, in the sense of it just explained, are democratic by their nature, because they have to satisfy rules of consistency, external reference, evidence, that are accessible in principle to all, *public and accessible*—if sometimes only with difficulty—as are the realities themselves to be known.

There is nothing democratic whatever, on the other hand, about a perspective that plunges these matters into utter arbitrariness and irrationalism. Laclau and Mouffe 'democratically' cut *everybody* off from access to what could meaningfully be called either truth or objectivity—with the single exception, dear to all relativists, of themselves. Overtly denying that there is any being-as-such, any in-itself, in terms of which competing discourses might be adjudicated, they install somewhere out of sight a secret tribunal of truth, mysterious in its ways, which allows *them* to judge here: as 'essentialist', hence *wrong about the nature of the world*; as economist, thus unable to understand the *reality* of the social; as determinist, therefore misconstruing history's *actual* openness, etc.; which allows them to employ a language of external reference, of objectivity, of truth (saying not 'that is how we like to look at it', but 'this is how it *is*, here is what *happened*, *these* are the developments') to tell us what is really what; which allows them that long, that tireless,

⁴⁷ For references, see PM, p. 45 n. 8

that never-ending 'this is how it is', with which the relativist tells you why you cannot say 'this is how it is', so sending rational knowledge and consistency to the devil.⁴⁸

There is another aspect to Laclau and Mouffe's complaint against me. It is that, 'absolutely definite about the psychological motivations that led (them) to write (their) book', I directly accused them of bending before careerist and political pressures, the pressures of self-interest and age. I did not. What they refer to here are the framing remarks of the introduction to my article, in which I raised *in quite general terms* the question of how far such pressures have been at work in the rightward drift of so many left intellectuals of my generation, and in the flight, within this, of so many of them from Marxism.⁴⁹ I freely concede that by placing these reflections at the start of an essay concerned exclusively with the critique of one book I may have created the basis for being misunderstood as I have. I did take some care, however, to emphasize that I was *not* putting in question the authors' integrity, as they themselves acknowledge but choose to discount. And such reflections are, in any case, perfectly legitimate ones; for anyone except she or he who imagines they are not subject at all to social pressures, that the pursuit of ideas is just exclusively that. Intellectuals can have a way of being extremely kind to themselves, ready to explain the behaviour of the whole world, but not to have their own situation within it exposed to discussion, as though they alone were beyond the pull of motives, disinterested, pure seekers. As a general issue, the question of pressures can reasonably be posed—especially in the social and political climate of today, and in face of numbers of quite unbalanced farewells to Marxism and indeed socialism, many of them lacking in intellectual substance. If Laclau and Mouffe just *know* this question is not relevant to their case, well and good. It is a confidence that sits oddly beside their dismissal of 'transparency' as a dream, and not one I would be willing to claim for myself. Still, I do not gainsay them on this. People can be moved just by the force or the flow, or by the play, of their ideas.⁵⁰

But enough is enough. The two of them express a mock surprise that I should have devoted so much space to a book I judge so negatively. There is no cause for puzzlement. As a certain giant thinker contributed to explaining, the reach and the hold of ideas is not always a direct function of their truth or quality. Because he was not the reductionist he is so often represented as having been, he knew also that criticism of mystifying ideas is necessary, nevertheless, to trying to weaken the hold they have. In this case it is necessary for a quite particular reason.

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Andrew Collier and Bob Fine for discussions on this point (and cf. Bob Fine, *Democracy and the Rule of Law*, London 1984, pp. 199–200). I also take the opportunity of here thanking my friend, Paul Cummack, for more general discussion of the various issues. None of these individuals, of course, is hereby implicated in responsibility for what I have said.

⁴⁹ WA, p. 81, PL, pp. 40–2.

⁵⁰ With reference to the introduction to my essay, Mouzelis writes 'what is really crucial in the context of a debate such as this is less to ascertain the reasons, conscious or unconscious, behind an author's break with Marxism and more to establish the cognitive validity or non-validity of what he or she has to say' (*New Left Review* 167, pp. 108–9). It is just because I think this that I devoted forty pages to arguing about the validity or non-validity of what Laclau and Mouffe had to say.

Laclau and Mouffe's insubstantial attack on Marxism and insubstantial alternative to it exploit the proper concern there is today about socialist agency. It has been put to me a few times, and it is something they themselves play on in both the introduction and the conclusion of their 'reply', that their thought is at least addressed to an important set of problems. Yes. But intellectual work has not yet become so easy that just addressing serious problems suffices to vindicate whatever they are addressed *with*.

Socialist thought is faced, today, with two broad kinds of difficulty. On the one hand, and as is only to be expected in consequence of the breadth and immensity of socialism's objectives, it is faced with problems of theory, of understanding; analytical and empirical questions, whether about the changing nature of capitalism, the forms and principles of a socialism worthy of the name, the movements, the moralities and the strategies that might have a chance of constituting it. It is now widely recognized, and amongst socialists of the most different persuasions, that answers are not so easy to come by. They are a long haul. The practice of producing or discovering them, as is also widely recognized, must inevitably be a many-headed, collective effort, in which open debate, a careful weighing of other viewpoints, innovation, revision and emendation, take their place beside commitment and enthusiasm. But socialist thought presently also confronts, on the other hand, a singularly hostile political and intellectual environment. It is pressed in from all directions by those ready to write it off, deride it, belittle both its hopes and its achievements as illusion or dross.

So besieged, socialist thought—in all its currents and varieties—has an even heavier responsibility than it should generally own to anyway, to conduct its discussions in a spirit of sobriety and just proportion and with a sense of the complex paths that truth and error alike persist in tracing across all straightforward maps of the historical intellect. Argument by caricature and simplification; by easy reduction and intellectual short-cut; by light-minded use of such hackneyed vulgarizations as have already been answered many times over (and as will be seen today for vulgarizations not only by Marxists but by a substantial number of fair-minded, non-Marxist students of Marxism)—this is a dual dereliction. It obstructs fruitful socialist debate. And it reinforces the currently difficult external environment of that debate. It is no fit style for the kind of socialist pluralism we need. In any case, enough is now more than enough.

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Perestroika: The Dialectic of Change

To Western observers, Soviet society at the end of the 1970s seemed hopelessly conservative and arguments over the 'unreformability of Communism' became commonplace among dissidents and the liberal intellectuals who sympathized with them. Pessimism reigned even among official experts, many of whom, on their own admission, 'had fallen into the depths of despair'.¹ There seemed no prospects for the future of the country other than an expectation of slow decay. However, with the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev, the general mood rapidly changed. People who, until recently, had had no faith in even the possibility of reform, began to speak confidently of its irreversibility. The experts were gripped by reformist euphoria and the western press, of both left and right, began to write of the success of the changes in the USSR with unprecedented enthusiasm. Although nobody denied the difficulties being encountered by *perestroika*—particularly the opposition of the bureaucratic apparatus and the complex economic situation of the country—nothing was capable of shifting the general mood of triumph.

Hopeless pessimism was transformed into so much unbridled optimism, although the actual dynamic of social development was much more complicated and contradictory than was generally recognized.

Soviet society has never been as monolithic as it was presented by Stalinist ideology or the oversimplified western conceptions of totalitarianism. Numerous interest groups, forming both within and outside the apparatus of power, have always exerted influence on decision-making and engendered a variety of conflicts. In Stalin's time these conflicts were one of the reasons for the mass 'purges' within the Party when the executions of prominent party and state figures signalled changes in the relationship of forces between different groups within the apparatus. Under Khrushchev the terror was brought to a halt, but a continuation of the open struggle between factions led first to the downfall of the all-powerful Minister of State Security, Lavrenty Beria, and later to the removal of Stalin's 'veterans' Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich. In the last analysis, Khrushchev himself was a victim of this struggle.

It was not simply a matter of clashes between people sharing power or of a conflict of opinions. Each of the participants in these events leaned for support upon definite structures in the apparatus and championed their interests. It was precisely the lack of faith of the broad bureaucratic 'mass' in Khrushchev's programme of reforms, and the absence of a social base for it outside the apparatus, which led to the fall of Khrushchev in 1964.

Brezhnev and the Eclipse of Reformism

At the moment of Brezhnev's accession the reformist faction in the ruling circles had practically no serious backing. The rehabilitation of victims of the terror in 1954-56, the debunking of Stalin's 'cult of the personality', the loosening of state control over cultural life and the vital extension of individual rights in that period were a very great historical achievement, but it should be remembered that all of these radical measures also played a major role in the struggle between apparatus interests by weakening the position of one faction and structure and promoting the role of others. Khrushchev's early success was connected with the unanimous desire of the ruling circles to put an end to the omnipotence and irresponsibility of the repressive organs at that time, and to place the reorganized state security service under Party control. At the next stage the impulse for continuing the political (but not the economic) reforms was the striving of the younger generation of apparatchiks to strengthen their own position and to edge out and discredit Stalin's 'old guard'. From the moment these goals appeared to have been achieved, the reformist potential of Khrushchev's thaw was exhausted and those people who had risen to their positions thanks to destalinization were interested not in continuing the changes but in preserving stability. Since Khrushchev, carried away with his own reforms, did not wish to take this into consideration, he was removed

¹ See the very candid interview with Nikolai Shmelev in *Krasnaya Obshchina*, 1988, No. 1.

from his post and replaced with a more suitable leader—Leonid Brezhnev.

The most important peculiarity of the Brezhnev period consisted in the ability of the leadership at that time to maintain a stable compromise between factions in the apparatus while simultaneously raising people's standard of living. It was necessary to guarantee significant and consistent economic growth so that each social group could increase its share of the cake without affecting the interests of others, and to a certain degree this objective was achieved. In the late 1970s and early 1980s workers' incomes grew rapidly and their way of life changed. There was a sharp increase in the number of privately owned cars, nearly every home acquired a television and refrigerator and millions of people continued to be rehoused from the 'communal quarters', where several families shared a kitchen, into normal, modern accommodation. The quality of building and the general provision of living space also improved. It is characteristic of the period of Brezhnevism that there were virtually no major strikes or disturbances comparable to the events at Novocherkassk in 1962 when the Khrushchev leadership was forced to send in troops to crush workers' protests against a rise in prices.

All of these social successes were achieved with a simultaneous growth of the armed forces and a rapid expansion of the government apparatus (which, from the point of view of the bureaucrats, served as the most important indicator of progress). Military-strategic parity was gained with the USA and the influence of the USSR in the world, particularly with developing countries, increased rapidly. Contrary to the popular view which formed towards the end of the Brezhnev era, the 1970s were undoubtedly one of the most prosperous and successful periods in Soviet history. What means were employed, and at what price these successes were achieved, are another question . . .

If Khrushchev attempted to blend political reforms with the maintenance of the traditional principles of economic management then Brezhnev, at first, chose to do directly the opposite. Political stability had to be combined with economic reform, the intention of which was to broaden the rights of the intermediate link of the economic apparatus and to form a layer of 'Soviet managers'. This reform, begun in 1965, could have accelerated the growth of the country and, at the same time, have satisfied the technocrats whose specific weight within the ruling circles was steadily increasing in proportion to the modernization of society. However, it very soon became clear that, in practice, the reform was only exacerbating contradictions between the economic and Party apparatuses within the economic apparatus itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Brezhnev leadership which valued stability so highly rapidly curtailed the changes. By 1970 the reform had in fact ground to a halt.

The reform was accompanied by hopes for improving the efficiency of the economy. Insofar as these proved to be without foundation, however, Brezhnev and his supporters were forced to make maximum use of other, extensive factors of growth. Enterprises had no real incentive

to renew equipment (it was quite enough to fulfil the plan with the old machinery, and reconstruction placed the fulfilment of the plan under threat). As a result massive centralized investments in new enterprises became necessary. All of the material, labour and financial resources that existed in the country had to be used to the utmost in the realization of this programme. Not surprisingly, the economy began to 'overheat' fairly quickly. The rapidly rising volume of money in circulation was not guaranteed by the supply of goods and the means devoted to the construction of new enterprises did not bring the planned return: building works dragged on because of the inefficient organization of labour, construction costs were rising all the time and the incipient shortage of money was concealed with the aid of the printing press. In order to receive additional resources, ministries were compelled to undertake new construction before completing the old. In the first half of the 1970s official propagandists loved to say that the whole Soviet Union had been turned into 'a gigantic building site'. By the end of the Brezhnev period they preferred not to recall this image. Many projects remained uncompleted over the course of several five-year plans, the cost of labour had increased fantastically, and there was a shortage of building materials, labourers and energy resources.

The maintenance of fixed prices for food, despite an extremely low productivity of agricultural labour and an uninterrupted expansion in effective demand, led to the state being forced to pay millions in subsidies while the population had to stand in queues complaining about the shortage of produce.

For a time all such problems were offset by increasing links with the West. Détente was a vital necessity for the Brezhnev leadership, and during the 1970s the Soviet economy became significantly more 'open'. However, the position occupied by the Soviet Union in the international division of labour clearly did not correspond to the status of our country as a strong industrial power. 'The basis of our exports,' wrote the economist A. Byko in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 'was, and still is, raw material resources, primarily oil and gas, which account for approximately 80 per cent of our hard currency exports. The sharp upward trend in world prices in the 1970s led to an almost twelve-fold increase in the price of oil and it seemed that such a situation would be maintained, at a minimum, until the end of the century. So why change the structure of exports and seek new reserves?' In its turn the imported equipment, acquired with 'petrodollars', could not be utilized with sufficient effectiveness 'because of bad management, chronically unfinished projects and slowness in familiarization'.² Despite the income from oil, the external debt of the USSR and the deficit on the balance of trade with capitalist countries grew appreciably. After the Polish events of 1980-81, Brezhnev's supporters came to the conclusion that it was essential to correct the situation in some way. The rates of growth of imports declined and debts were promptly paid off. Nevertheless the position of the USSR on the world market remained extremely precarious, as was revealed by the sharp fall in oil prices in the mid-1980s.

² *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 10 February 1988.

The Crisis of Brezhnevism

The years 1979–80 proved fateful for the Brezhnev model. Contradictions and errors which had been concealed over many years began to drift to the surface. Tempos of economic growth began to fall appreciably, relations with the West steadily worsened and in Eastern Europe, 'pacified' for a full twelve years after the suppression of the 'Prague Spring', the situation suddenly destabilized. In Poland, the crisis quickly assumed a political character and led to a direct confrontation between the government and the workers' movement *Solidarity*, but other countries of the Eastern bloc were also encountering serious difficulties. When, in December 1979, Brezhnev decided to send Soviet forces into Afghanistan to save the 'fraternal regime' from the brink of collapse, nobody expected this to be the start of a prolonged conflict; it was perfectly clear, however, that the old political methods were no longer appropriate to the new reality.

The crisis of detente, the beginning of the war in Afghanistan and the events in Poland were, of course, not only the result of Brezhnev's policies. The West had entered a phase of structural changes, and a 'neo-conservative wave' had emerged in the majority of capitalist countries. Brezhnev and his supporters bore direct responsibility for the political failures of their allies in Poland and Afghanistan, but events in the rest of the world exposed the complete inconsistency of the political thinking which predominated within that leadership. With its orientation to stability, it expected, in an utterly irrational way, that the outside world would maintain an unaltered appearance and that qualitative changes were improbable. If oil became more expensive this was 'until the end of the century', if liberals dominated American politics this was an 'irreversible shift', and so on. The Brezhnev elite seemed psychologically quite unprepared for the explosions of the 1980s. Attempts to maintain the status quo through force, as happened in Afghanistan, only complicated the situation.

By the beginning of the 1980s the opinion had formed among the most varied strata of Soviet society that Brezhnevism had exhausted itself. The new generation, which had grown up during the years of 'stability', was more educated and demanding. An inconsistent modernization of the way of life had generated new demands and, in the end, a new dissatisfaction. People felt themselves more independent and demanded respect for their civil and human dignity. The years of 'stability' had passed to the benefit of society: social bonds had been strengthened and people had a better conception of their collective interests. In their turn the contradictions between bureaucratic departments were exacerbated to the point where it became clear that 'the epoch of fine pies' was at an end. The shortage of resources provoked interdepartmental clashes and made planning and decision-making at all levels much more complex. The emerging lag in the field of modern technology produced a feeling of horror among the military especially when the United States proclaimed its idea of 'space-based defence'. Thus not only the lower classes were seized with discontent but also a significant section of those at the top.

A paradoxical situation had arisen. On the one hand, society was fully ripe for change, but on the other, there was no serious movement of any kind for reform. Dissidents had never, even in their better years, proposed a programme of social transformation. Throughout the whole period of its existence, the dissident movement had advanced the slogans of human rights and defence of the freedom and dignity of the individual, but its incapacity to formulate a constructive programme meant that the slogans became ever more abstract and divorced from the real problems of the lives of the masses. As a result the dissidents pinned their hopes more and more on diplomatic pressure from without. It was proposed that the 'free world' should force the Brezhnev leadership into concessions in the sphere of human rights. Such a strategy, for all its questionable aspects, was at least understandable in the epoch of detente. But it became perfectly suicidal in the conditions of heightened international tension in 1979-82.

Compared with the 1960s, when the human rights movement was born, a significant evolution had taken place by the end of the Brezhnev period. After the defeat of the 'Prague Spring', a general move to the right could be discerned in this milieu. Academician Andrei Sakharov, who initially favoured 'socialism with a human face', had, little by little, adopted a liberal standpoint and many of his statements (for example on Vietnam and detente) were utilized by American hawks in their efforts to strengthen their position morally. An even more serious shift to the right took place among the 'new emigration', whose numbers had begun to grow rapidly from the mid-1970s. The most surprising thing is that the dissident movement, though in desperate need of detente, practically never recognized this fact.³ Many in the dissident milieu welcomed the coming to power in the West of such figures as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as a sign that 'at long last a decisive stand had triumphed in the free world'. In practice the immediate consequence of the crisis of detente proved to be a new round of repression against 'anti-socialist elements' and a worsening of the situation with regard to human rights.

By the end of the 1970s the dissident movement was in serious crisis. A significant section of activists had left the country, many had been arrested, some had dropped out of public activity. The most important cause of the crisis, however, was not repression but the absence of a political perspective. While the influx of people into the movement had declined, this in no way signified that there were fewer dissatisfied people in the country. Rather, in the new conditions, protest had assumed other forms.

³ At this time the only exceptions were the brothers, Roy and Zhores Medvedev, who always emphasized the connection between detente and human rights. It should be said that, in general, the majority of dissidents did not consider that 'the Marxist Medvedevs' belonged to the movement. They continually attacked them, bringing all possible accusations against them right up to 'collaboration with state security'.

A New Opposition and the Rebirth of Reform

The characteristic features of the 1979–82 period were, on the one hand, a strengthening of reformist tendencies within the establishment and, on the other, the emergence of a new socialist opposition. Unofficial left groups existed among the youth back in the 1950s, but under 'mature Brezhnevism', their number was insignificant. People who had suffered for such activity during the 1950s and 1960s had either given up the political struggle or joined the dissidents, losing their socialist ideology in the process. The situation swiftly changed in connection with the crisis of the dissident movement. New samizdat journals began to appear whose authors declared their Marxist orientation, discussion circles sprang up and there was a sharp growth of interest in socialist theory. The intensification of cultural links between the USSR and the outside world in the epoch of detente had had an influence on the ideology of these groups. As opposed to their predecessors in the 1950s, the 'young socialists' had a fairly thorough understanding of the ideas of the Western Left, from Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg to the Frankfurt School, and they could utilize the experience of the reformist and 'revisionist' movements in the 'fraternal countries' of Eastern Europe.

In many respects the ideas of the Left intersected the projects of official reformist experts, both attempting to formulate a realistic programme of changes on the basis of a socialist perspective. Both recognized the need to combine planning and market principles in the economy and the inevitability and necessity of democratization from above. However, in contrast to the reformist academic establishment, the Left placed an emphasis on self-management of production. If the official experts, with rare exceptions such as B. P. Kurashvili, have advocated a unique Soviet 'managerial revolution', the Left has declared workers' democracy as its aim. Moreover, in the opinion of the majority of young socialists, the supporters of official reformism have evidently reevaluated the potential role of 'Soviet managers'. Workers in the government apparatus were genuinely interested in definite changes but, at the same time, were afraid of them. The industrial management apparatus in the localities was dissatisfied with the departmental bureaucracy at the centre but, at the same time, was tied to it by indissoluble bonds. Relations between the 'captains of industry' and the local Party apparatus were shaped in a similar manner. In the opinion of the Left this limited the reformist potential of the technocracy, even in the implementation of a moderate technocratic project. Successful changes could only be begun on initiative from above, but could only be completed by a mass movement from below.⁴ Relying on the intermediate strata not only does not guarantee profound changes in society; it does not even allow the consistent implementation of a programme of limited reforms along the lines of Hungary in the 1970s. (It is no secret that it is precisely this 'model' which has inspired the majority of liberal experts.)

By the beginning of the 1980s such ideas were being developed in the pages of three samizdat journals—*Variants* ('Alternatives'), *Poiski*

⁴ This programme was formulated in the samizdat journal *Sotsializm i Budushcheye* ('Socialism and the Future') (Luzhskiy Prospekt) 1980, nos 3–4.

(‘Searches’) and *Levyi Poporot* (‘Left Turn’). Radical groups had formed primarily in Moscow and Leningrad, but the demand for such publications also grew rapidly in other cities particularly among the youth. Nevertheless, the Left was still very weak and had no political or organizational experience. In April 1982 most of the more active representatives of the new Left were arrested. *Levyi Poporot* and *Variants* discontinued publication, as *Poiski* had done even earlier.

Because of the crisis in the dissident movement and the weakness of the Left, official reformism remained the only real alternative to Brezhnevism. This current had also experienced certain difficulties. The reformist experts were mainly clustered around research institutes in Moscow, Novosibirsk and Leningrad. Their mouthpiece became the Novosibirsk journal *EKO* which, under the editorship of Abel Aganbegyan and Tatiana Zaslavskaya, attempted to combine scientific profundity with popularity of exposition. What could not be said in the text because of censorship was often ‘spoken’ by the wicked cartoons illustrating almost every article. The popularity of *EKO* grew rapidly in the late 1970s and early 1980s although the readership remained fairly mixed. The editors conducted a special investigation to determine ‘Who are you, our readers?’ In fact *EKO*, like the reformist current itself, had numerous supporters in the most varied strata of society ‘from the worker to the minister’, but could not count on the support of any broad social group. The apparatus of economic management proved to be divided almost equally between supporters and opponents of reform; in the Party apparatus, groups which were oriented toward change were compelled to coexist with conservatives, whereas the intelligentsia supported the reformist project ‘for want of something better’.

The social lack of direction of the reformist programme had its positive aspects. Reformist experts appealed more to an understanding of ‘objective necessity’ than to specific interests, and this created the feeling of an unbiased approach and an interest in the highest objectives of the state. Moreover, the indispensability of change was indeed acknowledged among the most varied social groups. Even conservatively minded figures saw that the USSR’s growing lag in the field of ‘high technology’ could lead to an undermining of military might and that economic weakness could prove debilitating for a world power.⁵

Paradoxically, what the Left saw as the greatest failing of the liberal experts’ project—namely, its vagueness and lack of direction—assisted the formation of a broad and diverse coalition of supporters of change. Credit should be given to Yuri Andropov who, during his tenure as head of the KGB, began the very difficult job of uniting various factions and groups in the apparatus into a bloc of ‘healthy forces’. Naturally, different individuals and groups expected different things from the changes. Some merely hoped to force out the Brezhnev ‘mafia’ from leading positions and to occupy the empty seats, while others wished to reinforce the military and political might of the country; a third group dreamed of a redistribution of power and rights among departments; a

⁵ Typically, the research of Academician Tatyana Zaslavskaya, which proved that the manageability of the Soviet economy was steadily deteriorating, aroused a considerable echo.

fourth group was sincerely concerned to make Soviet society more free, just and dynamic. In any event, all were united by the understanding that it was 'impossible to go on living in the old way'.

Both those at the top and those at the bottom of society felt they were coming to the end of an epoch. Everyone desired renewal. The problem was that its meaning was not uniformly understood.

It was generally felt that Brezhnev's death came about two years too late. From 1980 the country was already living in expectation of this event.⁶ When it finally happened even functionaries could not, at times, conceal their satisfaction.

The selection of Andropov as General Secretary was testimony to the political crisis of Brezhnevism but not yet to its final demise. In his very first declarations the new leader gave notice of his intention to carry through transformations not only in the economic but also in the political sphere. Experts began to elaborate draft reforms, overloading the leading bodies with them. The word 'reform', which had almost disappeared from the pages of official documents, began to appear more and more often in the press. A resolute struggle was launched against corruption, which had become virtually a way of life for Brezhnev's elite. Some activists of left groups who had been arrested in 1982 were released and their places in Lefortovo prison taken by embezzlers and bribetakers. Meanwhile Brezhnev's supporters, recovering from the initial shock of their leader's death, became aware of the impending danger and began to mount energetic resistance. Not a single one of the reformist projects considered at the highest level became an official document. Reform of the schools, proclaimed in the summer of 1983, was reduced to a list of good intentions and then, in practice, killed off.

The Impact of Chernobyl

Andropov's death and Chernenko's coming to power complicated the situation still further. In the person of Chernenko, the country had gained a leader who openly aspired to make his principle 'Brezhnevism without Brezhnev'. However, the lack of perspective in such a policy was apparent from the very first months. The economic situation continued to worsen and the struggle between departments and groups over the drawing-up of any directive document was exacerbated to the highest degree. The country lived in expectation of a succession of solemn funerals.

The death of Chernenko and the selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary in spring 1985 brought an end to the protracted interregnum. The reformist current again found itself at the helm, but of the tasks set at the beginning of the eighties not one had been achieved. Almost another year was required to secure a working majority in the Politburo, Central Committee and Council of Ministers for supporters of the new leader. From day to day the newspapers reported

⁶ During this time the following anecdote was popular in Moscow. A person is reading a lengthy newspaper obituary and a neighbour on the Metro asks, 'Already?' The reader replies: 'Not yet'.

on the permutations within the highest echelons of power. The 'veterans' of the Brezhnev mafia, Romanov, Tikhonov and Grishin, gave up their posts, but it proved much more difficult to undermine traditional bureaucratic 'claims' in the national republics. Here Brezhnevites maintained their positions for a long time, even within the highest Party organs. The protracted struggle of the Moscow reformist leadership against the Kazakh Party leader, Kunaev, ended in December 1986 with his removal as First Secretary of the republic's Communist Party, but this provoked serious disorders in Alma-Ata. Many national-Brezhnevites can look on these events with satisfaction. After Alma-Ata, Moscow became much more careful in similar situations—which helped the traditional leaderships in the Ukraine and a series of other republics to retain their positions.

Nevertheless, the Gorbachev faction was undoubtedly triumphant. The Twenty-Seventh Congress consolidated its success by electing a new Central Committee and the idea of economic transformation and democratization was reinforced, at least in general formulations, in the new edition of the Party programme. The word *perestroika* was heard from the highest platforms. However, in reality, society felt the changes only after the Chernobyl catastrophe in the summer of 1986.

The atomic reactor accident at Chernobyl revealed at once the numerous weaknesses of the traditional management system and its incompatibility with modern technology. Long before the disaster many specialists had pointed to the economic and ecological miscalculations attendant on the seventh strategy of developing atomic energy. The reactors were built too close to densely populated industrial centres and construction was carried out with infringements of the design. Nevertheless, the Brezhnev leadership insisted on the most rapid fulfilment of the 'atoms for peace' programme, which it saw as the magical means of resolving the aggravated energy problem. When the catastrophe happened it became clear that the power station was being run by incompetent people, that the firefighters, sent to the place of the incident, were unprepared for duty in conditions of radioactive fallout (although the existence of such a danger was mentioned more than once in the specialist literature), and that the local bosses concealed information on the real state of affairs from the highest echelons of power, as a result of which the situation deteriorated even further.

No one believed the first newspaper reports, which patently understated the scale of the catastrophe and often contradicted one another. The confidence of readers was only re-established after the press was allowed to examine the events in detail and without the existing censorship restrictions. The policy of openness (*glasnost*) and 'uncompromising criticism' of outmoded arrangements had been proclaimed back at the Twenty-Seventh Congress, but it was only in the tragic days of the Chernobyl disaster that *glasnost* began to change from an official slogan into an everyday practice. The truth about Chernobyl which eventually hit the newspapers opened the way to a more truthful examination of other social problems. More and more articles were written about drug-abuse, crime, corruption and the mistakes of leaders of various ranks. A wave of 'bad news' swept over the readers in 1986–87, shaking the

consciousness of society. Many were horrified to find out about the numerous calamities of which they had previously had no idea. It often seemed to people that there were many more outrages in the epoch of *perestroika* than before although, in fact, they had simply not been informed about them previously. After the information on the crimes and errors of the contemporary period, new material about Stalin's evil deeds began to break through. Writers, journalists and cinematographers, aware of the new opportunities, rushed to make use of them.⁷

If the first period of *perestroika*, which lasted from spring 1985 to spring 1986, can be called a time of struggle in the apparatus, events clearly entered a new phase in the summer of 1986. The 'golden age' of *perestroika* had begun.

Glasmnost and democratization became the watchwords of the day. Reformist, left-wing and anti-Stalinist ideas were obviously predominant in the mass media. The old mechanism of economic management functioned as before but the political situation had changed. A majority of representatives of the Brezhnev group had already been ousted from their positions in the Politburo and the 'intermediate link' in the apparatus had gone over to passive resistance, defence of their privileges and blocking the implementation of reforms. Draft changes passed many times through innumerable commissions, one version of the text being replaced by another and endless amendments and elaborations being introduced. The bureaucracy had selected the tactic of filibustering, drawing out the decision-making process to the maximum extent. Many resolutions, adopted at the centre, were not implemented in the regions and every possible 'instruction' and 'position' was devised to limit the reforming effect of the new legislation.

The official programme of changes, based on the ideas of Aganbegyan, Zaslavskaya and their 'Novosibirsk group', was initially quite moderate. It proposed an expansion of enterprise autonomy while maintaining the system of centralized planning, the admission of a small private sector, mixed international enterprises in some branches of the economy and the regulation of the administrative and legal systems. The restraint of this programme was its chief political virtue in that representatives of the most varied currents within the Party elite and the country as a whole could put their names to such minimal demands. For the Left the idea of mixed corporations was rather uncomfortable from an ideological point of view, but this was not a central point and the Left anyway still played no significant role in events.

The Logic of Democratization

However, even such a moderate programme proved difficult to carry out in the face of resistance from the bureaucracy, and some sort of untraditional means of pressure on the government apparatus was required. Essentially, even the realization of the most lukewarm programme of economic restructuring demanded radical political shifts. Democratization was to become an *instrument of reform*.

⁷ See my article, 'The Intelligentsia and the Changes', NLR, July-August 1987, pp. 5-26.

The state of affairs in the economy remained extremely unstable. After Gorbachev came to power the slogan of acceleration (*uskorenie*) of socio-economic development was advanced and enterprises were required to increase their output at any price. In reality, enterprise directors called into circulation hidden reserves of raw materials and components put by 'for a rainy day'. Many managers were working sixteen hours a day. All of this could not fail to yield results. The economic indicators for 1985 were appreciably better than for the preceding year. On the one hand, department heads had demonstrated that there was no need to hurry with the reforms because it was possible to achieve reasonable results with the old management mechanism and that it was only necessary to increase the pressure on directors. On the other hand, directors now had to maintain the achieved level at any price so as to avoid serious trouble. In practice, it was impossible to fulfil the plan according to the traditional indicators while simultaneously redesigning the system of management. Something had to be sacrificed. The opinion spread even among official experts and reform-minded planners that the real restructuring would have to be postponed until the 1990s and that the current five-year plan (1986-90) would have to be extended somehow on the basis of the old mechanism. Meanwhile economic growth in 1985, despite the selfless efforts of workers, engineers and many production leaders, remained highly unstable. Chernobyl showed how unreliable was the old system of management. The catastrophe strengthened the arguments of those in favour of quickening the pace of reform. Moreover, the capitalist world, having overcome the most recent phase of its structural crisis, was experiencing a period of rapid growth. The neo-conservative wave was reaching its apogee and the Reagan administration did not conceal its intention of utilizing the increased economic superiority of the USA over the USSR to alter the military-strategic balance in its favour. The war in Afghanistan continued without any serious military or political successes and the situation in the countries of Eastern Europe remained confused and unsettled. As before, the West treated Soviet declarations about restructuring with mistrust.

Political democratization created the only possibility of unblocking the situation and quickening the pace of change. The press, which had gained quite a lot of freedom, had to ensure independent monitoring of the implementation of decisions and to assist the 'pressure from below' on the bureaucracy. The return to Moscow of Academician Andrei Sakharov and the freeing of political prisoners enhanced the authority of the Soviet government in the international arena and provided evidence to the whole world of the effectiveness of *perestroika*. Many representatives of the sixties intelligentsia, who under Brezhnev had stayed on the political periphery or bided their time, returned to prominence. The Left also became much more active.

The January 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee had to reinforce the shifts which had been taking place throughout the previous year. By Gorbachev's own estimation, the Plenum 'advanced democratization

as the major driving force of *perestroika*'.⁸ A whole series of proposals put forward at the Twenty-Seventh Congress were made more concrete. Gorbachev directly declared the necessity of changing the electoral system in such a way that there would be more officially nominated candidates than seats in the Soviets. The Plenum also discussed the election of enterprise directors and section heads and the creation of self-management organs in production. A special Party Conference on problems of *perestroika* was called for June 1989, although its powers and tasks were not precisely defined.

Although the reforms proposed by Gorbachev were quite moderate, the intermediate link of the bureaucratic apparatus continued to resist. Implementing even a part of what had been discussed at the Plenum proved extremely difficult. 'Experimental' elections of factory directors were conducted in a series of enterprises which, for some reason, were without a boss. No existing directors, however, wished to subject themselves to this experience, and section heads and administrative personnel were appointed, as before, by the director. Although the new law on state enterprises, which envisaged the democratization of industrial life, came into force on 1 January 1988, almost nowhere did the administration permit workers to intervene in the process of decision-making. In addition, many points of the law had been formulated very vaguely. Councils of Labour Collectives were established in the factories, but in most cases the administration itself laid down their powers and tasks and the method by which they were to be set up. Very often the directors headed the new 'organs of self-management' and turned them into an appendage of the administrative apparatus.

Elections to the local Soviets in summer 1987 took place on the basis of the old electoral system. In several districts an 'experimental' list contained one candidate more than there were deputies' credentials, but even here candidates who finished in last place were given the status of 'reserve deputy' if they had managed to gain more than 50 per cent of the vote.

Nevertheless, in almost every 'experimental multi-mandate district' the electors were able to take advantage of their new rights. In a majority of cases it was precisely the local bosses, who had traditionally sat in the Soviets, who were finding themselves 'overboard'. As *Izvestia* acknowledged, the list of 'reserve deputies' included a 'whole string of leaders'. Among those who had failed at the elections were Regional Committee secretaries, chairmen of the Executive Committees of Soviets and their deputies etc. 'Several "leading" candidates made it into the Soviet with difficulty, their fate being decided by a majority of one or two votes.'⁹ Even in districts where the old system had been maintained the electorate often acted in an unusual manner. Students at Moscow University voted against a functionary of the university administration responsible for the student canteen. According to a report in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* official candidates failed to be elected in 1,076 districts of

⁸ M. S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Myshlenn* ('Perestroika and the New Thinking'), Moscow 1987, p. 60.

⁹ *Izvestia*, 7 July 1987.

the country.¹⁰ It should be noted, incidentally, that the press covered these events in detail and even spoke of attempts to 'correct' the voting records which had taken place in certain instances.

The elections testified to the change in the psychological climate in the country. The life of society was reviving. Politics was no longer perceived as a pursuit of the privileged, nor criticism of authority as dissidence. In the conditions of liberalization all political and ideological currents existing in society came to the surface. Right-wing liberal dissidents grouped around the samizdat bulletin *Glasmost* and the Moscow seminar 'Democracy and Humanism'. Russian nationalist and fascist groups united under the banner of the *Pamyat* ('Memory') society. National minorities also voiced their own demands. In the Baltic states there were demonstrations marking the anniversary of the Stalin-Hitler pact in 1939 by which these territories came within the Soviet sphere of influence. In Vilnius several hundred people came onto the streets and in Riga the demonstrations were much bigger. The Crimean Tatars held a meeting in Moscow to demand rehabilitation and a reversal of Stalin's order expelling them from their native land. The left groups also underwent rapid growth.

The Club Movement and Yeltsin's Dismissal

The political situation which arose after the January Plenum was extraordinarily propitious for the Left. On the one hand, its demands coincided completely with the slogans of the day and, on the other, the Left was able to attract a growing number of people to its ranks who were disturbed by the slow tempo of real change. The swift growth of 'informal associations' began back at the end of 1986. The Club for Social Initiatives (KSI) and the *Perestroika* club in Moscow quickly became centres of attraction for the socialist and left-liberal intelligentsia. Ecological and 'cultural-democratic' groups were formed or gained in strength. The movement in Leningrad developed particularly rapidly. On 16 March, following the call of the 'cultural-ecological' group *Spasenie* ('Salvation'), hundreds of young people gathered at the Hotel Angleterre which had been earmarked for demolition. They were joined by representatives of other ecological and left groups, pupils from technical colleges and schools, workers and students. Stewards from the *Forpost* ('Outpost') group ensured that order was maintained. Journalists who were present acknowledged that everything was superbly organized: 'there were no excesses of any kind'.¹¹ Participants in the demonstration were unable to prevent the demolition of the building, but they made the larger point that citizens have the right to influence decisions taken by the authorities. The leader of *Spasenie*, Aleksei Kovalev, immediately became a well-known figure both in Leningrad and beyond. Independent left groups advanced his candidature for the City Soviet, but the electoral commission refused to register him. In its turn the Moscow press came out in criticism of the Leningrad authorities and in support of Kovalev and *Spasenie*.

¹⁰ *Leningradskaya Gazeta*, 1 July 1987.

¹¹ *Izvestia*, 26 March 1987.

By the summer of 1987 it was already possible to speak of a mass movement in which thousands of people were taking part in various regions of the country. The platforms of the different groups varied in important ways from one other, as did the forms of their activity. The desire for unity was combined in many clubs with distrust towards other groups, sectarianism and mutual rivalry. Nevertheless, participants in the movement more and more felt the need to elaborate a common platform and to set practical collaboration under way.

In August 1987 the KSI held a conference in Moscow of the fifty-two leading progressive groups at which the founding of the Federation of Socialist Social Clubs (FSOK) was announced. While preserving their various differences, the groups within the Federation jointly declared themselves in favour of socialist pluralism, self-management of production and the democratization of planning. FSOK's Declaration advanced specific political demands: the abolition of censorship and the right of clubs to stand their own candidates in elections. The economic section remained the least worked-out and it was decided to prepare special documents at a later date which would concretize FSOK's positions on the questions of self-management and planning. The clubs unanimously declared that the reform must be carried out without a drop in workers' living standards and must maintain social provision for cheap accommodation, free medical care, full employment, etc. The extension of the role of market factors in managing the economy was seen as natural and inevitable, but stress was also laid on the dangers of triumphant technocracy and of a substitution of market fetishism for plan fetishism.

FSOK was joined by clubs not only in Moscow and Leningrad but also in Kuibyshev, Krasnoyarsk, Novorossiisk, Ivanovo, Saratov and elsewhere. Throughout the autumn of 1987 the Federation experienced continual growth. Publication commenced of its samizdat bulletin *Svidetel* ('Witness')—later, in recognition of tradition, it was renamed *Lesyi Posvost*. FSOK representatives had an opportunity to speak before foreign journalists at the official Novosti Press Agency, and material about FSOK appeared in several newspapers. However, in November the situation suddenly changed.

On 31 October, Central Committee Secretary A. Lukyanov, speaking at a Novosti press conference in front of foreign and Soviet journalists, reported that at the regular Plenum which had just taken place disagreements had arisen over a speech by Boris Yeltsin, and he had been forced to resign as Moscow Party leader. This report had the impact of an exploding bomb, but public opinion was shaken even more by the silence of the official newspapers. Lukyanov's words were reported in Western Europe, China, Hungary and Poland but Muscovites were obliged, as in the first days of the Chernobyl disaster, to find out the news about events in their own country from foreign radio. Yeltsin was well known as one of the most stalwart supporters of *perestroika* and his resignation seemed an ominous sign. The left clubs unanimously protested against the silence of the mass media although, within a majority of groups, there were pointed discussions about what could be done in such a situation. FSOK activists began collecting signatures

on the streets of Moscow to a letter demanding complete openness (*glasnost*) in the Yeltsin affair. Vladimir Kurbolikhov from the *Obshchina* ('Commune') club, who had come down from Leningrad, Kovalev and several other members of FSOK were detained by the police while doing this. The crisis intensified even further when the central newspapers and local Moscow press published the record of the Plenum of the Moscow Party Committee at which Yeltsin had been removed from his post and accused of a multitude of political sins. At Moscow University students held a spontaneous meeting and organized an initiative group which made contact with KSI and FSOK. Many Party organizations in Moscow refused to support the decision of the Plenum.

Later, in January 1988, Gorbachev acknowledged that, because of the 'Yeltsin affair', the Party leadership had suffered serious criticism from the Left and that the removal of the Moscow leader had been interpreted 'by a certain section of the intelligentsia, particularly the youth, as a blow against *perestroika*'.¹² In their turn, conservative-minded officials saw Yeltsin's dismissal as a signal for counterattack. Serious administrative pressure began to be exerted on the clubs and several activists were forced to abandon their jobs. It became extremely complicated to engage in any activity on an official basis. Clubs were not able to use premises and their reports did not pass through the press, although back in September there had been no problem with this. The Krasnoyarsk section of FSOK, the Committee for Assisting *Perestroika*, found itself in an extremely difficult position. After activists from the Committee had accused a series of figures in the local leadership of corruption, the Party Regional Committee took a special decision against this group, and one of its members, V.B. Chetvertkov, was expelled from the Party. Similar events occurred in other cities.

A majority of clubs continued to emphasize the legal character of their activity and their preparedness to collaborate with progressive groups in the Party and state apparatus. This did not, however, prevent them from being accused of 'unconstructive positions' and 'attempts to undermine the foundations'. In winter a genuine Stalinist campaign commenced in the press against the Left. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Pravda*, *Vesernyye Moskva* and *Moskovskii Komsomolets* all came out with attacks against FSOK and individual clubs. *Pravda* also attacked the noted playwright Mikhail Shatrov, who was in favour of a more consistent analysis of the Stalinist past and historical justice with regard to Stalin's opponents (including Trotsky). Judging by the tone of some articles, the conservative groups in the apparatus were seriously frightened by the growth of left activism after the events of August and November 1987. Liberal journalists preferred to keep quiet in the expectation that this 'conservative wave' would soon pass.

In liberal reformist circles reference was made to Gorbachev's winter vacation and the illness of one of the leaders of the progressive faction, Central Committee Secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev. The Stalinists' counterattack was not triggered, however, by a fortuitous set of circum-

¹² *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 13 January 1988

stances. *Perestroika* had entered a new phase and the political delineation of society had been sharpened.

Technocracy and the Market

If, during the earlier stages of *perestroika*, the slogan of change had been capable of uniting the most varied currents within society and the apparatus, it was clearly no longer sufficient. Many representatives of the 'new generation' of apparatchiks, who had been able to acquire important responsibilities during the course of events in 1985-86, were inclined to consider the fundamental tasks of *perestroika* fulfilled and to regard with apprehension any 'experiments' which might threaten their hard-won prosperity. The comparative warmth in international politics and the Soviet-American treaty on intermediate-range missiles—which to a significant extent were a result of the changes in our country—also, in their own way, reinforced the conservative mood in the apparatus. If many bureaucrats viewed internal political liberalization as a kind of 'price' to be paid for the trust of the West and a resumption of detente, their interest in political change clearly diminished when this goal seemed to have been achieved to a significant degree. Indeed, there were further misgivings, after the November outbursts by young people over the 'Yeltsin affair', that the democratic process had already gone 'too far'.

Of course, *perestroika* was continuing. The rehabilitation was announced of Bukharin, Rykov and other old Bolsheviks falsely accused by Stalin of creating 'the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' in 1937. The journal *Oktyabr* ('October') published V. Grossman's long-banned novel *Life and Fate*, and the first issue of *Latinskaya Amerika* ('Latin America') for 1988 carried a short note on Trotsky's life in Mexico. The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan was being prepared and the press openly wrote of the failure of the 'Afghan campaign': 'the fundamental goals have just not been achieved'; 'the presence of Soviet forces in the country has lost all sense. Withdrawal is inevitable and logical.'¹³

Nevertheless, the dynamic of events was not as it had been in 1986, and among reformists there was a feeling of some dismay. Many radical slogans were repeated in a ritualistic way without any serious resolve to try and carry them out. Experiments with the election of directors were curtailed (although the law which formally made elections obligatory had come into force). The ideologists of economic reform, dissatisfied with the results which had been achieved, advanced all sorts of new proposals and, having lost their former unity, argued all the more furiously among themselves. In the words of the eminent Soviet jurist, B.P. Kurashvili, the measures taken in the period 1985-87 were so superficial and half-hearted that *perestroika* risked 'not even reaching its hazily presented final goal.'¹⁴ It was essential to formulate more precisely the tasks of economic and political reform and to develop a specific project.

¹³ *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 17 February 1988

¹⁴ *Lepustka*, 15 February 1988

Whereas, at first, the technocratic and democratic concepts of change had more or less peacefully coexisted it was now necessary to draw a clear distinction. The technocrats, more and more obviously defending the interests of the industrial management apparatus, saw the way out of this complicated situation in the partial elimination of social provision and the importing onto Soviet soil of the recipes of the neo-conservative theoreticians of the West. Nikolai Shmelev, one of the most fashionable authors of this trend, quite candidly defined his programme with the words: 'Everything that is effective is moral.'¹⁵ Together with other theoreticians of the technocratic school (G. Lisichkin, G. Popov et al.), he has viewed social provision as a brake on development and a 'survival of feudalism'. The technocrats no longer concealed the anti-democratic character of their proposals. In the pages of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* Lisichkin declared that the starting point of reform had to be the interests of the 'advanced' minority, hampered in its development by the slow, backward majority. The task of *perestroika* was to overthrow the 'tyranny' of the majority and to assert the superiority of the elite.

The expansion of market relations is the main slogan of technocratic ideologues. In fact, however, the 'market' phraseology of this group should be treated with extreme caution. The structure of the Soviet economy, formed under Stalin, guarantees an absolute monopoly position to the leading enterprises and departments. For decades the major part of investment has been devoured by the factory giants producing means of production. Everything has been organized in such a way that the consumer is subordinate to the producer and this is explained not only by the absence of a market but frequently by the absence of any real choice. The economy is oriented not to the satisfaction of human need but to self-reproduction. This 'self-devouring economy', to use the expression of the noted scholar V. Selunin, cannot become more humane through the proposed reorientation from central directives to profit criteria. The means are changed but not the goal.

In these circumstances the proposed 'playing of the market' can only turn into a rise in prices, inflation and increased exploitation of the consumer by monopolist organizations. It is typical that the technocrats, who continually emphasize that the market will solve a majority of problems, are highly disdainful of structural reform in the sphere of production and of a redistribution of investments, although it is perfectly obvious that without such measures 'normal' market competition would simply just not happen.

The concrete recommendations of this school are reduced to the removal of food subsidies and the raising of prices in the name of improving financial health. At the same time they propagandize the slogan of 'self-financing', which is understood in practice as the freedom for monopolists to increase prices. Since January 1987, when a series of departments transferred to the principles of self-financing, the newspapers have begun to report fast-rising prices on the most varied goods and services, from trips abroad and window-cleaning to . . . funeral services. Analysing the higher cemetery prices for 1987, the Moscow

¹⁵ *Krasnaya Obshchina*, 1988, No. 1, p. 2

sociologist A. Rubinov remarked, not without irony, that 'the economic prospects for this branch are "indeed marvellous".'¹⁶

The essence of the matter is that, under the guise of 'reform', workers are being forced to pay for the economic miscalculations of the bureaucracy, bad management, structural imbalances and the pre-crisis situation of the economy. It is perfectly clear that such proposals cannot find mass support. In data obtained from surveys more than 70 per cent of the population are opposed to them.¹⁷

The concepts of the new technocratic school have not been accepted as an official *perestroika* strategy and on several occasions have even been criticized by Gorbachev. However, the influence of its supporters in the apparatus has been steadily growing and particular concepts can be detected more and more frequently in official documents. There is nothing surprising in this. Technocratic ideologists have suggested methods which, under a veneer of radicalism, are completely acceptable to the bureaucracy, and have also proposed the retention of traditional structures within both the economic and political systems of society. Despite its anti-Stalinist rhetoric, the technocratic current has converged more and more with the conservative-Stalinists. The brutal apparatus of political control has proved an essential element in a strategy based on frustrating the interests of society and lowering the standard of living of those at the bottom. It is also patently obvious that *glasnost* and self-management—the watchwords of the previous stage of *perestroika*—have no part in these concepts.

It is no accident that G. Kh. Popov, one of the major ideologists of the technocracy, appeared in the press with denunciations directed at Yeltsin while bluntly suggesting that, in this complicated situation, the Left might prove more dangerous than the conservatives. After Yeltsin's downfall the technocrats and Stalinists began to act more often as a united front, propagandizing for a rise in prices and for the elimination of those figures who, in their opinion, were too far to the left and on whom they had pinned the label of 'vanguardism'. Naturally, both sides have viewed this compromise as purely tactical but the objective dynamic of events has pushed them into each other's arms.

In many factories the workers have begun to demand changes in the organization of labour, *glasnost* at the workplace, dismissal of incompetent and corrupt leaders, a shortening of working time and an end to overtime. The press reported on strikes and spontaneous meetings in many enterprises towards the end of 1987. In December sharp conflicts arose between workers and the local authorities in Krivoi Rog and Volgograd when an absence of money at the bank and the much tighter financial discipline resulted in the non-payment of wages. The workers protested, proving that they, at any rate, had legally earned their money and could not be held responsible for non-fulfilment of the

¹⁶ *Litovskaya Gazeta*, 17 February, 1988

¹⁷ Data taken from the research conducted jointly by the Central Economic-Mathematical Institute and *Litovskaya Gazeta*. Materials from the research were published in part in the PSOK bulletin *Levyi Povorot*, 1988, No 5.

financial plan. Officials mourned the passing of the 'good old days' when it was possible simply to use force. In accordance with the classical laws of the revolutionary process a polarization of forces was taking place in the country.

Conclusion

In January 1988 the well-known Soviet economist, V. Seliunin, wrote that two years of *perestroika* had revealed the bankruptcy of the fundamental concept of official economic science. The reformist current had proved to be in no condition to elaborate and propose to society a radical project that could arouse the enthusiasm of the masses. The major achievement of *perestroika* remained *glasnost* but it could not automatically resolve the country's social and economic problems. Now, wrote Seliunin, 'structural shifts are required in the economy—it is necessary to turn from work for its own sake to people and their needs.'¹⁸ Such a *perestroika* would, in its turn, only be possible if it maintained the living standards of the masses and developed the industrial, political and local democracy which gives workers the opportunity for real participation in decision-making.

The aimless projects of the first years have proved to be unrealistic. The experience of Soviet society has, once again, demonstrated that the most moderate decision is not always the most sensible. In the place of abstract notions of the 'common good' has come a consciousness of the real conflict of interests in society. 'The struggle is not simply between bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats,' wrote one of the commentators of the popular journal *Novyi Mir* ('New World'), 'but between social groups on which they both depend for support. The major question is: who is capable of leading the mass forces that have a real interest in *perestroika*, in scientific, technical and cultural progress, and are its fundamental vehicle and thus the vehicle for the general interest—the workers with the highest skills, embodying the most advanced productive forces, and the scientific, technical and humanitarian intelligentsia.'¹⁹ Thus the radical wing of official reformism has finally come to the conclusion, as a result of two years of *perestroika*, that the changes cannot be completed without the support of specific social interests. However, the strategy proposed by this current—to mobilize the modernizing intermediate strata—in no way solves the problem of finding a mass base for the transformations. Only if the real collaboration of the intermediate and lower strata can be secured within the framework of a radical, reformist project will it be possible to forge a powerful social bloc capable of opposing the bureaucracy. What is needed for this is not a boost to the social egoism of the 'advanced' (and essentially the most prosperous) social groups but, on the contrary, a struggle to gain their utmost solidarity with the wider masses. Such a broad platform is entirely possible. Within it are included political democratization, the development of industrial and local self-management, the maintenance of social provision, a redistributive, anti-bureaucratic policy under democratic control from below, defence of the interests of the consumer,

¹⁸ *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya*, 5 January 1988

¹⁹ *Novyi Mir*, 1987, No 11, p. 188

and a gradual reorientation of the economy, taking into account ecological and humanitarian factors, towards the satisfaction of human need.

Socialist democracy must also provide the individual with social and legal guarantees. It is important to change economic priorities in such a way that people really become the major goal. Decision-making must be decentralized and democratic procedures must be created which are incompatible with both bureaucratic and technocratic approaches to administration. Finally, the half-measures which are convenient for the bureaucracy must be replaced with new, consistent, democratic legislation. It is not a question of choosing between plan and market (in any modern society there are both). The genuine choice today is between a developing civil society and bureaucracy. Upon which forces gain the upper hand depends the future of socialism in our country and, perhaps, the whole world.

Translated by Rick Simon



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Introduction to Aganbegyan

The Soviet Union is going through its most radical transformation since the 1930s or, arguably (indeed, as argued by its leaders), since the 1917 Revolution. Many 'impossibles' become possible overnight. There has been a rapidly broadening political involvement of different social forces: administrators and officers, artists and writers, workers and peasants, of the different ethnic, gender and age strata and of different political generations. Major cities are alive with informal groupings; newly created clubs debate, and factions rapidly break surface. The mood suggests the Europe of 1968, from Paris to Prague, both in the explosion of new ideas and in the rapidly opening gap between words and deeds. And, as in every revolution initiated from above, the assumptions and the ideas professed by the main theorists matter profoundly. Only with their help can an extraordinary phenomenon be explained—a section of state bureaucrats leading a revolt against the Old Regime which bred them and pampered them for generations. Also, the language of ideas is the major means by which elites locked in conflict can establish bridges with their political hinterland, evoking mass support which could make the programme of change, or else provoking the foot-dragging or sabotage which could break it. Last but not least, in such historical moments some individuals, leaders and theorists assume extraordinary roles. When social structures harden, the force of inertia and of the reproduction of the status quo seem unlimited while the leaders appear as no more than privileged operatives of a machine which runs them. But then, occasionally, the human-made nature of the social structure becomes clear; the historical process opens up, and ideas as well idea-makers begin to 'make history'. The Soviet Union finds itself at this stage today.

In the context of a great effort to shift a country of immense size and inertia the identities of the people behind the ideas can tell us something about the ideas themselves, about the country and about the forces involved. One major figure who has dominated the debate and shaped the ideas of the *perestroika* is Abel Aganbegyan. To begin with the formal biographical details: Aganbegyan is fifty-five, an Armenian educated in the Russian provinces of the Union, a graduate of the once excellent Economic Planning Institute in Moscow. He began work in the state apparatus, was the Director of the Institute of Economics in Novosibirsk, is now a member of the Praesidium of the Academy of Sciences. He is also the Academy's Secretary for Economics, the titular head of the country's economists' research establishment. But this tale can be differently told.

A brilliant young man, an accomplished econometrician, Abel Aganbegyan landed the well-cushioned job of Section Head at the powerful State Committee for Labour and Wages. This meant the privileges of senior officialdom, a decent income and a measure of power, foreign trips and the security of further promotions. But then Aganbegyan did the unexpected. He asked to be relieved from his office

to return to the academic fold. This was promptly refused by his bureaucratic outfit as an outrageous frivolity and foolishness—for everybody should know which side of the bread is buttered. Aganbegyan forced the issue, volunteering to work in Siberia which by government decree had priority in the employment of specialists. His Moscow employers were not amused. Nevertheless, he survived and indeed found success. In the distant scholarly outfits of Siberia the mathematical maverick was first asked to disprove the views of the economic unorthodoxy of the 1960s, especially of Kantorovich. Aganbegyan, however, came down on the latter's side, lost a job, moved to a new place of work. Siberia was going through an economic frontier boom with advanced mining and modern transportation breaking into virgin forests and icebound lands. Economists were needed, specialists were in short supply, and at the frontiers there was more elbow room for unorthodoxy. Aganbegyan's skills were appreciated: he eventually rose to become the director of his institute and was elected to the Academy of Sciences—Soviet scholars' highest accolade. During twenty-four years in Siberia he also established a style of his own: moving constantly through the territory, endlessly visiting enterprises, talking to constructors, engineers and workers. He was also exceptional in that his vision of economics was broader than the usual one—the best Soviet unit of applied sociology grew up and survived hard times in his institute and under his stubborn protection. The leader of this unit, Tatiana Zaslavskaya, Russia's leading specialist in economic sociology, became a friend and ally. When a new and surprisingly young man Mikhail Gorbachev was put in charge of the country's agriculture and was called to the Politburo, both Aganbegyan and Zaslavskaya were invited to meetings with social scientists which Gorbachev introduced as part of his new regime—gatherings to discuss informally economic and social matters. The 'Siberians' with a message and the Politburo member with a new style took to each other.

In the Brezhnev days, USSR-watchers in the media and academia of the West consistently missed an element of the political life of the country they reported. Their conception was one of a dual polity: on the one hand the establishment and its power, Byzantine in its complexity and elliptical in its language, on the other hand the dissidents and the underground press, easily recognizable to the Western reader by their principles and language, and admired for their stubborn courage. The rest of the population was supposed to be apolitical. What this perception missed was a third group who did not join the dissidents but also refused to toe the line and to hold their tongues, i.e. to be cheerful and agreeable to wards those at 'the top'. They usually kept their jobs (the dissidents lost theirs) and kept their party tickets. After every 'black eye' given to them by the bureaucratic bosses they came back for more—arguing, objecting, demanding. In some ways their position was the worst of both worlds. At odds with the bureaucratic 'yes-men' and with the cynics, they refused also the mental relief of complaints to, and contact with, the Western press. They were thus attacked from both flanks: smart men on the make made careers out of abusing them while knowing their response would be muted; the dissidents condemned them as opportunists lacking the courage of their convictions. Without the recognition of this opposition from the inside and

the related phenomenon of the building up of a Soviet public opinion, *perestroika* becomes inexplicable.

During the twilight of the Brezhnev era, the rule of old men with their energies spent, the Novosibirsk Institute and its social scientists developed into a fortress of alternative thought. From there came protests when nature was being destroyed by state profiteers and when good people got hurt by Byzantine tricks: from the destruction of Lake Baikal to the trumped-up charges against Khudenko—a man who dared to prove the Kazakh bureaucrats wrong by increasing fivefold the agricultural production of his enterprise and who subsequently died in prison. It was from Novosibirsk that the memorandum came which defined the state of affairs as a growing split between the relations of production established in the 1930s and forces of production which had moved on by fifty years. The intellectual products of the Party Schools in the leadership ranks read this for what it was—a projection of a rapidly approaching revolutionary situation. Some of such writings were leaked to the Western press; most of them reached a growing circle of better educated administrators, technologists and scholars—an Establishment, but a very particular wing of it which came increasingly to favour a revolution from above. With the help of people like Aganbegyan and Zaslavskaya they were increasingly armed with an alternative programme.

The genuine radicalism of the Gorbachev programme is now increasingly recognized; but the conditions of its emergence must also be understood. Here the status of Aganbegyan as a 'Gorbachevian even before Gorbachev' must be acknowledged. In his book *The Challenge: The Economics of Perestroika* (Hutchinson 1988) Aganbegyan speaks for himself; he gives a detailed explanation, with case studies drawn from many different sectors, of the five main areas of economic *perestroika* in Soviet society:

1. The gross waste of manpower, energy and resources in the past, deriving from extensive methods of economic development which now must give way to more intensive methods based on greatly increased productivity in minerals extraction, manufacturing and agriculture.
2. A critical situation in housing, health and education resulting from the neglect of social investment where the 'residual principle' (of receiving what is left after investments in defence and industrial construction have been met) has to be replaced by priority allocation to meet the requirements of social justice.
3. The rigidity and inefficiency of bureaucratic interference in the administrative method of managing the economy by command, which is being phased out in favour of a new economic model, whereby the centre uses economic methods to regulate self-accounting and self-managing enterprises.
4. The discouragement and even suppression of individual and co-operative initiative in the service sector, which has found an outlet

in a proliferating black market; this situation is being corrected by new laws which, while prohibiting employment of wage labour, will encourage self-employment and worker co-operatives, within the framework of democratized local authorities.

5. The secrecy in, and absence of discussion of, an authoritarian style of government which is being opened up (*glasnost*) to debate and self-management in the democratization of the whole society.

The lecture which follows provides a valuable overview of this process of economic restructuring.

Two further factors, usually overlooked, must be noted. Let us do so briefly, without elaboration, before the reader turns to the text. First, a piece of convergence theory is often argued—'them' becoming like 'us'. This view suffers badly from lack of analytical imagination: the belief in only two possibilities or a scale between them, the 'free market' or 'state planning', the capitalist or the socialist. And, of course, if development simply takes this form the only question is how fast does it happen. The fact of the matter is that the Soviet Union is moving along its own trajectory towards something not yet seen or known. That is why its perception of itself, its images and its visions of the future are so important; as are the theorists who have defined those perceptions, images and visions. Second, there is something in those visions which forms part of their particularity and yet is systematically missed by Western-trained eyes. Aganbegyan's lecture may even contribute further to this miscomprehension if treated simplistically. What is striking in the Soviet debate is the powerful ethical charge; the argument is usually about justice, a better society, more humane human beings, concern for the truth, while massive economic reforms are looked at as deductions from the moral stance in which the debate is rooted. It is as if the days of 1903-7 and 1917-27 are back but with a new awareness of the dangers, and possibly informed by new bitterness of experience. This approach, which usually disappears through self-censorship or the filter of Western reporting, is not a clumsy piece of propaganda. To those who follow the argument it is as decisive for their position in the *perestroika* struggles as in their personal interests and careers. Indeed, without this particular dimension of applied ethics and without those men and women prepared to step out of the confines of daily routine and careerist manipulation, this most significant attempt to transform a major society and, thereby, the world at large, would be doomed. As things stand it has a chance.

Teodor Shanin

New Directions in Soviet Economics

Perestroika in the Soviet Union is a revolutionary renewal of the whole of Soviet society. It is not confined to economic change.¹ That is, of course, *my* special interest as an economist, but the economic restructuring that has already begun cannot be separated from all the other aspects of *perestroika*. We plan to step up the pace of growth in the economy, but this cannot be separated from the process of democratization and of what we call *glasnost*, a greater openness in all aspects of government and social organization. The economic changes which are taking place are all based on a re-examination of Soviet history, of the successes and the failures, the periods of reform and growth as well as of degeneracy and stagnation, not forgetting a proper appreciation of the appalling destruction of two world wars and the heroic struggle of the Soviet people to survive and rebuild their shattered lives.

There are two main reasons for the Soviet Union's adoption of the economic policies of *perestroika*.

First, the growth of the Soviet economy had markedly slowed down in the last two decades as the following table reveals:

Five Year Plan Periods	Growth of GNP over 5 years (%)	Growth of Agricultural Output over 5 years (%)
1966-70	41	21
1971-75	28	13
1976-80	21	9
1981-85	16.5	6

These are official figures which do not show the increase in prices. When these are taken into account with the 4 per cent increase in population, there was, in fact, no growth per capita over the last five year period, but rather stagnation in the economy. In 40 per cent of industrial sectors production actually declined and this included agriculture and transport. The standard of living of two-thirds of the

¹ A lecture by Professor Abel Aganbegyan at Manchester University Faculty of Social Studies, 26 November 1987, from notes taken by Michael Barnett-Brown

population began to fall. Stagnation was leading to crisis. A total *perestroika* was the only response we could make.

Secondly, there are deeper roots beneath this. Economic decline did not occur by chance but reflected a more general process. The fundamental issue was that the basic administrative method of managing the economy no longer corresponded to the needs of the country. The old policies did not reflect the new social circumstances. There was a conflict of old forms and current actual needs. *Perestroika* was needed, therefore, to overcome that mismatch—a profound transformation of society; not an evolutionary improvement, but a revolutionary, qualitative shift of a most complex nature involving all aspects of society.

Strengthening Social Provision

The economic aspect of the *perestroika* in the Soviet Union is proceeding in three ways. The first is *the strengthening of the orientation of the economy towards social needs*.

The standard of living of the people has been falling behind the country's industrial capacity. Priority has in the past been given to heavy industry; social needs have received only what was left over. The proportion of resources allocated to social needs is now to be increased. It will receive priority and not, as in the past, just be a residuum. That is the principal point. We may take particular examples from Housing, Food Supply, Health and Education.

Housing. 17 per cent of families have no separate house or flat but must share. The condition of many other families is unsatisfactory. Since the 1960s, 23 per cent of all capital investment has been in house building, but only 2 million housing units have been added each year up to 1985 to meet a significant increase in population. The proportion of real investment was in effect being reduced. This will be changed now so that in 1986 the new housing figure will be 2.3 million units, in 1987 2.4 million and by the early 1990s 3 million a year. By the year 2000 we shall have 40 million new units so that all families can have a separate house or flat.

Rents are very low at 2.7 per cent of income, including heat and light, and we intend to keep it so.

Food Supply. Nobody is starving and some, like me, are, as you see, overweight, but food consumption per year in relation to requirements is still as follows:-

		what our dietitians consider optimal
Meat	62 kg	75-85 kg
Milk	340	420-440
Fruit	30	60-80

A portion of our food is imported. In the 1986-90 Five Year Plan this included 40m tonnes of grain (a quarter of our meat was produced from

that grain) plus 1m tonnes of meat. This was bought in exchange for oil while the oil price was halved over this period. It is unacceptable to continue like this.

Increased purchasing power in the general population has been raising the demand for goods and especially for meat, milk and fruit, and there was a continuing shortage of supplies, aggravated by the low state prices of food products—fixed usually far below cost, e.g. meat production costs 4.8 roubles per kg and retails at 1.8 roubles per kg; milk production costs 58 kopeck per kg and retails at 28 kopeck per kg.

In 1986 food subsidies had risen to 57 billions of roubles in a total state budget of 430 billions. It became a major problem how to get out of this mess.

The following measures are proposed under *perestroika*:

- (i) to increase agricultural output between 1986 and 1990 by 14.4 per cent. Major measures have been taken to increase intensive farming. Administrative measures—commands and requisitions—are to be replaced by economic stimulation through raised prices and freer markets. In 1986–7 agricultural output was already raised: grain from 180m tonnes to 210m tonnes; meat from 15.2m tonnes to 18.7m tonnes; dairy products from 94.6m tonnes to 105m tonnes. This has permitted imports to be reduced, but the problem is not resolved since not all families have yet felt the benefit of the improvements.
- (ii) to reform the structure of retail prices by 1990. Retail meat and milk prices will have to be raised and compensation made to ensure there is no fall in living standards. There is serious popular concern here and it is intended to debate publicly all price rises at least four months in advance of these planned changes.

Public Health. At the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s the Soviet Union could compare favourably with other countries, e.g. mortality rate, 6–7 per 1000 (i.e. best in the world); life expectation, 70 years (as in Japan); child mortality, in the top 15. Since then there has been a serious deterioration, from three main causes: increased sales of alcohol, e.g. vodka sales up 100 per cent, wine sales up 400 per cent in 20 years, were largely responsible for raising the male mortality rate; the proportion of national income spent on health care was reduced to two or three times less than in other advanced countries. Technical advances in other countries have not been enjoyed by the USSR in the use of drugs, etc.; the pay of doctors and nurses has fallen relatively and many nurses' jobs remain unfilled. As a result, by 1985 mortality was up to 10.8 per 1000, life expectancy down by 2 years to 68 (while elsewhere it had risen by 3 to 4 years).

As steps to rectify matters, the health care budget and capital investment in health for 1986–7 were raised by 50 per cent. The campaign against alcohol has reduced consumption by half. Already the male mortality rate (from accidents and alcoholic poisoning) has fallen by 22 per cent

to 9.6 per 1000 and life expectancy has risen again to 70 years. Medical staffs have had a 30 per cent increase in salaries.

Of course, this is only one year and there are other new sets of measures, especially affecting the 57 million old age pensioners. The legislation here dates back to 1956 when it provided an average pension equal to 60 per cent of wages to women at 55 and to men at 60, or even earlier to those working in heavy industry. Today the pension equals only 40 per cent of wages in the cities and 30 per cent in the countryside. This must be improved. A new law next year will give new concessions to pensioners continuing to work. All these measures will need a big increase in the resources allocated.

Education. In the 1950s education took 10 per cent of the National Income. When the first Sputnik was launched, a Commission in the USA examined the cause of Soviet advances and decided that the secret lay in Soviet education at school level. At that time the US spent only 4 per cent of GNP on education compared with the USSR's 10 per cent.

By 1985 US spending on education had been raised to 11 per cent while that of the Soviet Union had fallen to 7 per cent, well below the demands of modern life. Schools are badly equipped, teachers badly paid and of low quality. Their salaries were raised in 1986-7 by 30 per cent but, of course, the results will not show up for some time.

This, then, is the first aspect of *perestroika*—a shift of resources to raise the general standard of living. But all this requires higher output based on higher productivity.

Intensive Development

The second main element in *perestroika* is the transfer from *extensive growth* to *intensive growth*. In past five-year plans, the labour force increased over the five year period on average by 10 to 11 million, fuel consumption increased on average by 25 per cent to 30 per cent, capital investment increased on average by 45 per cent to 50 per cent and in this way output was increased.

But since the mid 1970s such increases have not been available—the labour force increased by 3 million in the five years. Over the last fifteen years it increased by 20 million less than in the previous fifteen years because of the demographic results of the last war, fewer young people and more pensioners. To meet this reduction labour productivity would have to be raised by 100 per cent.

In fuel production deteriorating geological conditions have meant that output has been raised in the last five year period by only 3-5 per cent. In raw material production the same problems have been encountered and there have been increased demands for ecological protection and conservation. In capital formation the increase has dropped to 25 per cent over the last five year period from twice that figure before. All this has meant a slowing down in growth of the economy, just when

acceleration was needed. The only answer is increased efficiency through a major shift to intensive production. But how?

The way forward has to lie through technological progress. There have been revolutionary technological achievements in the USSR but they need to be applied. Much money is spent on science in the USSR and a high level achieved, but discoveries are not applied. There has been little renewal of production plant. There have been faulty investments, policies targeted on extra construction instead of technical renovation, and inadequate resources allocated to engineering, which has especially fallen behind. In 1985 a survey of engineering works found that 71 per cent of them were obsolete but only 3.1 per cent were being taken out of service each year. A change of policy was urgently required and in 1988 9.3 per cent of plant will be renewed rising to 13 per cent by 1990. This implies a fundamental technical reorganization. Capital investment between 1981 and 1985 was increased by 24 per cent. It is planned to raise it by 80 per cent between 1986 and 1990, and this will mainly take the form of reorganization of existing plant and not of new construction. Already in 1986-7 this was taking place to an extent far beyond the rate during the whole previous seven years. Such a process of transformation in manufacturing is painful but it will result in increasing labour productivity by 1.5 to 2 times while reducing metal consumption by 15 per cent.

Management Reform

The third element in *perestroika* is the *reform of management*—moving from administrative methods to economic measures. Everything else depends on this reform. Enterprises have to change in their economic management from a system of administrative commands to regulation by economic means—prices, interest charges, wholesaling. This means the reform of finance and banking as well as of price formation, and a move away from centralized allocation of resources to buying and selling in the market. These reforms are targeted for 1988-90 so that the new era will be ushered in with the following five year period.

The distinctive feature of this reform is industrial democracy moving towards self-management in enterprises. The increased role of the workers in enterprises will involve them in determining the enterprise plan, the allocation of resources and the election of managers. It is a revolutionary programme. There will be much opposition, especially from management that fears the risks and dislikes change. This can only be overcome because the whole society wants to make a change. The driving force is political openness and democratization. The first stages, the first experiments, have already begun. The first laws have been passed and will come into operation in 1988. The next stage will involve big and onerous changes, but we believe that the direction of change is correct.

Questions and Answers

- Q. *How will extra income be generated to compensate for higher food prices?*
- A. Higher productivity will raise incomes as the result of more freedom for producer and consumer and the use of new technology.
- Q. *Will prices be related to international prices?*
- A. Prices of resources—coal and oil—are too low; manufactured goods prices are too high especially in relation to quality; food prices are too low. We shall relate them more closely to international prices and we must eventually move towards rouble convertibility.
- Q. *The technological improvements will require imported machinery. Without a switch from the arms race how much can the USSR afford?*
- A. We are developing our own machine-building industry but imports will be needed from capitalist and non-capitalist sources. We have great resources to help us to survive—both natural and human resources.
- Q. *How much will prices be fixed by the state, how much by buyers and sellers?*
- A. The role of state-defined prices will be reduced except for essentials and these will be related more closely to the market. The mass of consumer goods prices will be determined in the market and through competitive contracts.
- Q. *Will perestroika mean a change in relations with other Comecon members?*
- A. The monopoly of the ministry of foreign trade will be ended. Twenty ministries and seventy enterprises can already trade directly on the world market. Others on the home market will be opened to world competition over time. 1,300 enterprises are in the first list. Credits in foreign currency are already available. Comecon will be an important base for our foreign trade but we look to a generally more open economy.
- Q. *How will enterprises be coordinated when they are free to act in the market?*
- A. We shall learn how to use economic methods in the new conditions as we go along. Ministries have to stop their day-to-day interference and restrict themselves to a research and operational role. Their staffs will be reduced by some 30–50 per cent. I have gone into much detail of the economic model in my book on the introduction of *perestroika*.
- Q. *How will the gap between the more and less developed parts of the USSR be affected?*
- A. New methods of budgeting include the republic budgets. Pro-

portions are defined centrally, but local budgets can differentiate between enterprises at different levels in each republic. The central budget will be used to advance the more backward and produce an evening-out, but within that there will be more local independence.

Q. *If more power is given to enterprises what about bankruptcies and redundancies in inefficient enterprises?*

A. The law now permits the winding-up of non-viable enterprises—not at once but after help has been given to overcome the problems, help drawn from a special ministry fund. If an enterprise still fails it will be wound up. Workers will get a few months wages and the security of redeployment. Assets will be sold off to pay creditors.

Q. *Who did you learn from in making your reform plans?*

A. We are learning from experience in Eastern Europe and in China and also from capitalist countries. (I was interested in the problems of transformation in Manchester at Trafford Park.) Some elements of each may be useful and we shall draw on them, but each country has different conditions: (a) from the GDR we have taken the integration of institutions of science and technology with industrial enterprises and also the combination of collective and individual work; (b) from Hungary we have taken some elements of the agricultural reforms and of price-formation policy; (c) in the case of Yugoslavia we distinguish between different stages in their development and find the 1960s the most useful, but we reject the extra rights given to the republics which broke up the national market and we have learnt negatively from the unprofitable proliferation of heavy industry in every republic and from the danger of a foreign debt of \$20 billions.

Q. *What confidence do you have in sustaining popular support for the reforms?*

A. People fear the price changes and many are not yet clear about the meaning of *perestroika* for them personally. We have to move forward with a switch to meeting social needs before we can make very radical changes, but the decisive movement in the transformation of the methods of management has already begun. It may go slower than we hope, but it will not be stopped. As to the details, we shall necessarily make mistakes, but we will learn from them and then move on all the faster.

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Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System

Perry Anderson is too modest in his claims for *New Left Review's* interpretation of English history, recently restated in 'The Figures of Descent'.¹ He suggests (p. 27) that 'the consensus of at any rate the local left' upheld the criticisms of that interpretation in Edward Thompson's famous essay 'The Peculiarities of the English'.² The principal theme of the NLR analysis—advanced by Anderson in 'Origins of the Present Crisis' and by Tom Nairn in various articles—was that the roots of Britain's twentieth-century decline lay in 'the archaic nature of a ruling stratum, whose personnel and traditions stretched back to an agrarian past that had been unbroken for centuries by civil commotion or foreign defeat' (p. 57). Yet this idea, far from being a minority or heterodox view, seems to have become the common sense of the British left, particularly when it is linked, as it is by Anderson in 'Figures', to the thesis that the City represents the dominant fraction of British capital. The supposedly 'archaic' and 'patrician' character of the ruling class is captured in different ways, from Stuart Hall's claim that Britain 'never ever properly entered the era of modern bourgeois civilization'³ to the more routine Labour Party denunciations of Thatcherism as merely the representative of the metropolitan, yuppified south-east; but the basic theme is the same. Nor is this problematic confined to the left, however generously defined. The Social Democratic Party staked their claim as the bourgeois modernizers of Britain, aspiring to transform the country into a rationally ordered European polity. Further to the right, Corelli Barnett has discovered gentlemanly amateurism undermining even the Churchillian war economy. Anderson praises Barnett's *The Audit of War* for its 'historical depth' (p. 47), without noting that the book is a local version of the stab-in-the-back myth, explaining Britain's post-war decline as a consequence of the way in which liberal

¹ NLR 161, January/February 1987. All references in the text are to this article. This comment on Anderson's article was written before the events of 19 October, 'Black Monday', on Wall Street and elsewhere. The global stock market crash, however, tends to corroborate my arguments.

² Reprinted in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, London 1978.

³ S. Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', *Marxism Today*, June 1987, pp. 17, 19.

do-gooders threw away victory in the field by constructing the welfare state at home.

If Barnett's politics places him on the extreme right, his culturalism is much more representative. He writes: 'The explanation of the "British disease" has to be sought in the nature of British society itself, *its attitudes and its values*.'⁴ A similar pre-occupation with culture as the source of British decline is typical of much writing on the subject, and has been given canonical form by Martin Wiener in his *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980*. Anderson provided his own version of such an explanation in 'Origins', but—no doubt because of a change in his view of Gramsci's theory of hegemony, on which he drew in that first essay⁵—now thinks that 'it was given too cultural a turn' (p. 57).

The significance of 'Figures' seems to me twofold. First, it seeks to restate the original 'Nairn-Anderson thesis' primarily in terms of the specific socio-economic character of English capitalism, avoiding any reliance on ideological or broader cultural factors. Secondly, Anderson now draws on recent work, notably by W.D. Rubinstein and Geoffrey Ingham, which attributes the persisting aristocratic character of the ruling class both to a preponderance of land, commerce, and finance among the very wealthy throughout the nineteenth century, and to the economic and political rôle of the City, its structural separation from industry, its integration with old landed wealth, and its progressive predominance within the state thanks to the instrumentality of the Treasury. This admittedly more materialist version of the original NLR theses has been subjected to detailed and devastating criticism by Michael Burratt Brown.⁶ Since I agree in general with his arguments, I shall not repeat them here. I shall concentrate instead on the political implications of Anderson's article. Since it offers a view of English history capable of appropriation by various political projects, from the 'new revisionism' of *Marxism Today* to Corelli Barnett's Tory corporatism, what kind of socialist strategy does 'Figures' imply?

I. A Second Bourgeois Revolution?

Here there is a difficulty. Not only does Anderson draw no political conclusions from his analysis, but he says remarkably little about the character of the contemporary British state. Aspects of that state—the alleged dominance within it of the City-Treasury nexus, its lack of any 'regulative intelligence' capable of reversing economic decline (pp. 73ff.)—are discussed. Absent, however, is any comprehensive attempt to characterize the institutional order of the state and its relationship to the main classes in British society. Others, however, have been less cautious. Robin Blackburn not long ago called the British state 'the last ancient régime'.⁷ This kind of analysis was most fully developed by Tom Nairn in an article first published in NLR about ten years ago: 'an in-

⁴ C. Barnett, *The Artist of War*, London 1986, p. 183. Emphasis added.

⁵ See P. Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', NLR 100, November 1976/January 1977.

⁶ M. Burratt Brown, 'Away with All the Great Arches', NLR 167, January/February 1988.

⁷ Robin Blackburn, 'Socialism and Britain's Ancient Regime', *The Liberator*, January 1987.

depth historical analysis shows that, while not directly comparable to the most notorious relics of the twentieth century, like the Hapsburg, Tsarist or Prussian-German states, it retains something *in common with them*. . . . Although not, of course, an absolutist state, the Anglo-British system remains a product of the general transition from absolutism to modern constitutionalism: it led the way out of the former, but never genuinely arrived at the latter.⁸

As Thompson long ago observed, such a view of the British state as '[n]either feudal nor modern'⁹ presupposes an essentially normative conception of bourgeois revolution, which treats any capitalist transformation as 'incomplete' if it fails to conform to an ideal type usually derived from the Great French Revolution.¹⁰ Such an approach is evident in 'Origins', where Anderson described the English Revolution as the '*least pure bourgeois revolution of any major European country*' because of the absence of an urban, Jacobin-style leadership which justified the thorough-going destruction of the old order by appeal to a universal and rationalistic ideology.¹¹ The use of the French Revolution as a normative model has rightly been largely abandoned by Marxist historians, who now prefer to identify bourgeois revolution, in the words of Gareth Stedman Jones, with 'the global victory of a particular form of property relations and particular form of control over the means of production, rather than [with] the conscious triumph of a class subject which possessed a distinct and coherent view of the world.'¹²

Anderson is plainly uncomfortable with his original conception of bourgeois revolution, preferring now to see it as 'a series of successive ruptures' rather than 'a single primordial episode' (p. 47). Nevertheless, he continues to believe, with Nairn, that central to understanding the contemporary British state is the absence of 'the "second bourgeois revolution" in the British Isles—that "modernizing" socio-political upheaval that ought to have refashioned both state and society in logical conformity with the demands of the new age' of industrial capitalism.¹³ Anderson underlines what he believes to be the importance of the 'revolutions after the revolution' which took place elsewhere—the French revolutions of the nineteenth century, the American Civil War, November 1918 in Germany, and finally the upheavals suffered by continental Europe and Japan, but not Britain, during and after the Second World War. 'They were essentially phases in the modernization of the state, which thereby permitted a reinvigoration of the economy. The most conservative or regressive social elements of the ruling order . . . were eliminated, amidst a drastic recomposition of the dominant bloc' (p. 48). But—to take the most important European case—it is not at all clear that the Hohenzollern monarchy or the Prussian junkers

⁸ T. Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State', *NLR* 101/2, February/April 1977, p. 49.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Thompson, 'Peculiarities', pp. 46–48.

¹¹ P. Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', in P. Anderson and R. Blackburn, eds., *Towards Socialism*, London 1965, pp. 13, 17.

¹² G. Stedman Jones, 'Society and Politics at the Beginning of the World Economy', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 1 (1977), p. 86. See also, *inter alia*, the conclusion to C. Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England*, London 1974.

¹³ Nairn, 'Twilight', p. 17. See also *ibid.*, p. 49.

were in any serious sense obstacles to the development of industrial capitalism in Germany after 1871. Indeed, in their powerful polemic against the application of abstract models of bourgeois development to Germany history, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley argue that '[t]he *Kaiserreich* was not an irredeemably backward and archaic state indelibly dominated by "pre-industrial", "traditional", or "aristocratic" values and interests, but was powerfully constituted between 1862 and 1879 by (amongst other things) the need to accommodate bourgeois capitalist forces.'¹⁴ What Anderson himself calls the 'renewed importance' in the Federal Republic of the 'national tradition', established in the nineteenth century, of banks supervising industry (p. 73) hardly suggests that 1945 represented a radical break in the basic character of German capitalism.

A Modern British State

Blackbourn's and Eley's interpretation of German history raises the question of the extent to which the British state during the nineteenth century underwent a comparable process of transformation into a suitable vehicle for the interests of industrial capital. Certainly the NLR theses involve either ignoring the major bursts of institutional change in the 1830s and 1840s and then again in the 1870s and 1880s, or, implausibly, treating them as the consequence of aristocratic strategies for survival (cf. Peter Gowan's analysis of the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms of the civil service¹⁵). The absence of popular control over political institutions is therefore attributed to the 'archaic' and 'patrician' character of the British state. A good example is provided by Colin Leys's *Politics in Britain*, praised by Anderson as 'the best single synthesis on the British crisis and its contemporary consequences' (p. 72), but which seemed to me largely a compendium of *idées reçues*. Leys lists various aspects of what he calls 'the circumscription of democracy'—lack of police accountability, official secrecy, executive control of Parliament, the rôle of the monarchy, etc—which compare unfavourably with 'the practice of more democratic states' and are closely connected with the 'archaism' of the state, reflected for example in the absence of a written constitution.¹⁶

Yet these features of the British state are consequences of its *modernization*. The present relationship between Cabinet and Parliament was formed approximately a century ago and arose from the expanding functions of the state and the emergence of a modern party system based on a mass electorate—changes comprehensible only against the backdrop of a predominant industrial capitalism. The modern, unaccountable police force was formed as part of the struggle by both state and capital to break down working-class control over local government.¹⁷ The institutions of the 'secret state'—MI5, MI6, the Official Secrets Act, Special Branch—were developed primarily to defend *fin-de-siècle* British imperialism against its European rivals, colonial subjects, and working-class opponents, and have survived, remodelled, into the

¹⁴ D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*, Oxford 1984, p. 146.

¹⁵ P. Gowan, 'The Origins of the Administrative Élite', *MLA* 162, March/April 1987.

¹⁶ C. Leys, *Politics in Britain*, London 1983, pp. 246–58.

¹⁷ See J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, London 1974.

age of the American alliance. Even the monarchy in its contemporary form, dominated by elaborate ceremonial designed to elicit popular consent, is a late Victorian invention.¹⁸ The Windsors' ideological rôle aside, the monarch's residual political powers would no doubt come into play in a real crisis for the state; but how is this qualitatively different from, say, the French President's right to rule by decree under article 16 of the 1958 Constitution?

Behind the idea of Britain as an archaic, pre-modern state lies a normative conception not just of bourgeois revolution, but of capitalist democracy as well. Where are the proper exemplars of 'modern constitutionalism'? The United States, with its huge abstention rate in elections, vast campaign expenses, and oscillations between an imperial presidency and an anarchic Congress? West Germany with its constitutionally enjoined bans on extremist parties and deficit budgeting, and its *Berufsverbote*? France, with its militarized riot police, murderous secret services, and apparatus of colonial intervention run directly from the Elysée? All the major bourgeois democracies have particular features reflecting their historical development, internal social relations, and external position. What they have in common, however, is a set of structural limits whose effect is to prevent popular participation in control of the state. These limits are both a consequence of, and help to maintain, the capitalist character of these states. The British state is in no sense exceptional in this respect. Democracy is circumscribed in Britain because the state is capitalist, not because of its peculiar, 'patrician' nature.¹⁹

This argument is important because those who believe the British state is pre-modern are likely to conclude that the left's task is to complete the bourgeois revolution, to take up what Anderson once called '[t]he unfinished work of 1640 and 1832',²⁰ and initiate a 'second revolution' whose effect would be to transform Britain into a modern bourgeois polity. Naim believed in the 1970s that the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists would start the ball rolling,²¹ but there are other, equally implausible, versions of the same idea. Tony Benn, for example, has argued that Britain is 'the last colony in the British Empire', parliamentary democracy having been undermined by a malign alliance of the civil service, multinationals, NATO and EEC, and that the task of the left therefore is to restore 'self-government'.²² The trouble with this kind of argument is not that there are no strictly bourgeois-democratic issues in Britain today—socialists should, for example, defend the right of self-determination of the Scottish and Welsh peoples.²³ It is rather that the idea of a 'second political revolution' places at the top of the left's agenda the perfection of British parliamentary democracy through such devices as

¹⁸ D. Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820-1977', in E.J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983.

¹⁹ Various important issues concerning the relation between the state and capital are, of course, begged here. I discuss one area of current controversy, the significance of the international state-system, in *Making History*, Cambridge 1987, ch. 4.

²⁰ Anderson, 'Origins', p. 52.

²¹ See, for example, Naim, 'Twilight', pp. 37-61.

²² T. Benn, *Arguments for Democracy*, Harmondsworth 1982, ch. 1.

²³ See A. Callinicos, 'Should Scotland Separate?', *Socialist Worker*, 11 July 1987.

devolution and proportional representation. Leaving aside whether or not such measures would be intrinsically desirable, such a strategic focus could only reinforce the deep-seated parliamentary cretinism of the British left, and encourage their resistance to the fundamental truth of classical Marxism, often defended by Anderson, that the path to socialism lies through the revolutionary destruction of the state, not its reform.

II. British Capitalism

Addressing *that* issue, however, involves having some sense of the character and circumstances of British capitalism today. Here again Anderson is led astray by a normative model, this time of the conditions of capitalist economic success. He argues that they include 'a centralizing force capable of regulating and counteracting the spontaneous molecular movements of the market'. Such 'a regulative intelligence' took shape after the war in France (interventionist state bureaucracy), West Germany (investment banks), Japan (state *and* banks), Sweden (social-democratic labour movement), but was lacking in Britain (pp. 73-76).

Evident here is the influence of the French 'regulation school' whose best-known exponents are Michel Aglietta and Alain Lipietz. Their starting point is a disproportionality theory of crisis, according to which the fundamental problem of capital accumulation lies in disequilibria between Department I (means of production) and Department II (means of consumption). Each specific 'régime of accumulation' and its institutionalization in a 'mode of regulation' represent a particular kind of solution to this problem.²⁴ Given the emphasis placed on establishing institutionalized articulations of accumulation and consumption, it is hardly surprising that Lipietz should describe the nation-state as 'the archetypal form of all regulation'. Indeed, he argues that 'we must . . . study *each national social formation in its own right*'.²⁵ Such an exclusive pre-occupation with national, state-regulated economic spaces would be problematic enough without the regulation theorists' failure to integrate into their analysis the centrepiece of Marx's theory of crisis, the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. In its absence, concepts such as 'régime of accumulation' and 'mode of regulation' are likely merely to specify a variant of the notion of 'organized capitalism' elaborated by Hilferding and Bukharin after the First World War. As it is, Aglietta's account of 'Fordism', by which he means the integration of assembly-line production and mass consumption, lacks any explanation of how the stabilization of the world economy after 1945 made possible this accumulation regime's consolidation and proliferation throughout Western capitalism.²⁶

The Internationalization of the British Economy

To analyse any national capitalism outside a perspective on the world economy informed by Marx's theory of crisis would be mistaken. It is

²⁴ See especially M. Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, London 1979.

²⁵ A. Lipietz, *Mirages and Miracles*, London 1987, pp. 19, 20.

²⁶ For such an account, see C. Harman, *Explaining the Crisis*, London 1984.

doubly so in the case of so internationalized an economy as the British. The genuine peculiarities of British capitalism are twofold. First, the simple and obvious fact of priority, of having been the first capitalist economy, a transformation initiated in agriculture but then spreading to industry. Second, the extreme dependence on the world economy of British capitalism, whose expansion was inextricably bound up with the conquest of empire in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. In these two features lies the answer to Anderson's tacit challenge to his critics, to come up with a better explanation of British decline than his own (pp. 20–21). Faced in the late nineteenth century with the rise of new industrial capitalist powers such as the US and Germany, Britain suffered from what might be called the disadvantages of priority, in particular vast accumulations of capital in relatively backward technologies and a financial sector geared primarily to overseas investment. Anderson accurately characterizes the problems posed for Britain as 'the historical first-comer' (pp. 71–72); as he observes (p. 44), Hilferding had noted them in *Finance Capital*; Trotsky drew the political conclusion—that the US would supplant Britain as the dominant imperialist power—in *Where is Britain Going?* and other writings of the 1920s.²⁷

Historical priority cannot, however, explain Britain's precipitous post-war decline. Here the decisive factor is provided by the international orientation of British capitalism. Every major capitalist class experiences a tension between sustaining its national economy and engaging in the world market. The relative weight, however, of its international involvements distinguishes British capitalism—aptly described by Andrew Gamble as 'the world island'²⁸—from all its major rivals. Perhaps the most important episode in post-war British economic history consisted in the successive decisions by the 1945–51 Labour government to sustain Britain's international rôle through the American alliance, with all the foreign military commitments this entailed. Already by the late 1950s intelligent bourgeois commentators were pointing to the disastrous consequences for British competitiveness of the Attlee–Gaitskell 1951 rearmament programme, which diverted into military expenditure a proportion of national income second only to that of the US at a time when Germany and Japan were building up colossal rates of productive investment.²⁹

Elements of such an explanation are present in 'Figures' (e.g. pp. 55–57). However, they co-exist with a tendency to identify the international dimension of British capitalism with the City, itself conceived as the stronghold of the rentier and the middle-man. The implication is that British capitalism is deeply divided along the lines international/City vs. national/manufacturing. Thus: 'precisely the success of the peculiar British form of financial and mercantile capital on a world stage has prevented it from acting as the central nervous system of corporate

²⁷ See L. Trotsky, *Writings on Britain*, 3 vols., London 1974, esp. I and II.

²⁸ A. Gamble, *Britain in Decline*, London 1981, ch. 2.

²⁹ See, for example, A. Shonfield, *British Economic Policy since the War*, Harmondsworth 1959, chs. 2, 3 and 5. For a general discussion of the rôle of arms expenditure in post-war capitalism, see Harman, *Explaining*, ch. 3.

manufacturing at home.' (p. 71) This opposition is strongly, and rightly, contested by Barratt Brown. It leaves out of account the international significance of British *industrial* corporations. Much of the global activity of British capital consists not in the kind of 'intermediation' emphasized by Ingham and Anderson but in the ownership and control of productive resources. In 1985 British overseas assets were divided between £73.2 billion in direct private investment and £71.9 billion in portfolio investment.³⁰ British industrial capital is not co-extensive with manufacturing industry in Britain.

It is nevertheless true that the 1980s have seen an enormous and international expansion of the financial sector, of which the City has been a major beneficiary. London has, for example, the world's largest foreign exchange market, whose turnover in March 1986 averaged \$90 billion a day.³¹ Anderson is quick to see this development as simply a parasitic phenomenon: 'Under Thatcher, the City has boomed as never before: but never so much as an enclave rather than an engine of British capitalism as a whole' (pp. 69–70). Here again he ignores the involvement of British industrial companies in the surge of financial speculation. These corporations did not respond to their greatly increased profits in the mid 1980s by expanding their productive capacity in Britain. Most invested abroad. Some built up huge cash hoards, like GEC's famous £1.8 billion cash mountain. One—BP—even set up its own banking subsidiary. All eagerly participated in the world bull market. The net acquisition of financial assets by British industrial and commercial companies in the first three quarters of 1986 totalled £9.3 billion, compared with £2.6 billion in the whole of 1985.³²

A Global Crisis

The importance of appreciating the international character of British industrial capital and its financial activities becomes clear when we consider the suggestive final pages of 'Figures'. Here Anderson points to the emergence in the US economy of the British pattern of declining competitiveness and increasing internationalization and detects 'perhaps the signs of its ultimate generalization throughout the advanced capitalist world' (pp. 76–77). His remarks are highly compressed, and could be taken (possibly were intended to be taken) as signalling the convergence of p.e.-modern Britain and post-industrial America, perhaps as part of a massive global shift of productive capacity to the newly industrializing countries of what can no longer properly be called the Third World.³³ This would be unfortunate.

Certainly Western capitalism in the mid 1980s was gripped in a frenzy of speculation, manifested in soaring values on the world's major stock exchanges and accelerated by the formation of a global securities market, of which London's Big Bang was merely an aspect. The bull market,

³⁰ P. Green, 'British Capitalism and the Thatcher Years', *International Socialism* 2:35 (1987), p. 47. This article is a comprehensive and convincing analysis of the contemporary British crisis.

³¹ *Financial Times* (hereinafter FT), 20 August 1986.

³² FT, 15 April 1987.

³³ N. Harris, *The End of the Third World*, London 1986.

with its typical accompaniments of a boom in take-overs and real estate, was on a sufficient scale to worry even the normally calm *Financial Times*, which complained in the spring of 1987 that '[f]inancial markets seem to have broken free from real-world constraints and . . . are enjoying a heavenly dance of their own creation.'³⁴ This 'uncoupling of bourses from economic reality' has taken place despite the fact that the 'weak world economic recovery that began in 1983 is petering out.' But—perhaps most striking of all—the biggest surge in share values took place in the world's most successful major industrial economy, Japan. 'As for Tokyo,' the same article claimed: 'even the hardened professionals are beginning to blanch. The market has enjoyed an electrifying rise since 1985—the period during which Japanese industry has been hammered by the appreciating yen. Dividend yields are now negligible and many stocks are selling at seemingly ludicrous multiples of earnings.' The Tokyo Stock Exchange by all accounts displayed many phenomena supposedly peculiar to 'deindustrializing' Britain or America—the *shinyurus*, young institutional traders generating an enormous turnover in shares, for example, and high demand for the shares of heavy industrial companies whose ageing factories are sited on prime office land.³⁵

The disengagement of financial markets from the circuits of productive capital is thus a general phenomenon. So too is the involvement of industrial capital in financial speculation.³⁶ These developments are best seen, however, as consequences of the *global* crisis of capitalism, rather than as effects of cumulative national crises or signs of the 'deindustrialization' of the West. At their source lies the low rate of profit on productive capital world-wide, which in turn makes short-term investment in financial assets a more attractive option even for industrial corporations.³⁷ The internationalization of British capital in recent years is an extreme case of a general response to the advanced economies' common predicament. This is true even of Japan. Direct overseas investment by Japanese companies rose by 83 per cent, to \$22.3 billion in the 1986/7 fiscal year. Evading Washington's rising tariff walls is a chief motive: by 1990 Japanese companies will have the capacity to produce two million cars in the US.³⁸ Britain's participation in this general tendency nevertheless makes it in no sense exceptional. In that respect Anderson's concluding reaffirmation of Marx's insistence on the representative character of British capitalism strikes a sound note, even though it goes against much of what precedes it.

None of this is to deny that the British crisis has specific features arising from particularities of historical development or that the crisis here is especially acute. It remains essential, however, to place the British situation in the context of the general crisis of the capitalist mode of production. The alternative is to believe that the left must somehow

³⁴ *FT*, 18 April 1987.

³⁵ *FT*, 2 September 1986.

³⁶ See, for the US, M. Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, London 1986, ch. 6.

³⁷ See, for example, R. Brenner, 'The Roots of US Economic Decline', *Against the Current*, New Series 11:2 (1986), p. 17, and P. Green, 'Once Again on the Rate of Profit', *International Socialism* 2:32 (1986).

³⁸ *FT*, 26 August 1987.

³⁹ See A. Callinicos, 'Imperialism, Capitalism and the State Today', *International Socialism* 2:33 (1987).

take responsibility for reviving British capitalism. This can take vulgar forms, as in Neil Kinnock's description of Labour as the 'party of production', behind which lies the mythological picture of a deep-seated conflict between progressive, 'national' industrial capital and the reactionary, 'cosmopolitan' City.⁴⁰ Further to the left, Leys dreams of 'a counter-hegemonic strategy of the left . . . capable of securing the requisite advances in national productivity in a world of competing corporate and national capitalisms'. Leys is plainly a little unhappy about this scenario, which conjures up pictures of a left Labour government demanding that its working-class supporters match the productivity—and wage-levels—of their South Korean counterparts, for he also conjures up 'an alternative international policy which offers a credible alternative to that world'.⁴¹ Much, I suspect, would hang on that little word 'credible'. What was eminent good sense to the British mining communities—no pit closures on grounds of profitability—seemed like flat-earth nonsense to Mrs Thatcher and Sir Ian MacGregor. But those miners, and their brothers and sisters elsewhere—in Brazil, South Africa, and now South Korea—are laying the basis in their obdurate, heroic struggles of the *only* alternative to the ferociously competitive, globally integrated capitalism that is now taking shape at the end of the twentieth century.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Bryan Gould's remarks in a speech devoted to defending wider share ownership to a Labour Co-ordinating Committee fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference, Brighton, 27 September 1981: 'It is this century-old priority for the interests of those who hold assets as against those who make and sell things which is the principal characteristic of British economic policy, and which is the main explanation for our comparatively poor economic performance. We can make a radical policy departure from past orthodoxy, and strike a major blow for the people we represent, if we make it clear that the next Labour government will give priority to the real economy.'

⁴¹ C. Leys, 'The Formation of British Capital', *MLA* 160 November/December 1986, p. 120.

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The Myth of Market Socialism

We must be grateful to Alec Nove for keeping the controversy to the essentials, avoiding red herrings and side issues.¹ Our debate does not concern the most adequate strategy for assuring immediate rapid economic growth and increasing social equality in relatively less developed countries. Neither is its object the cause(s) of the growing malfunctioning of the bureaucratically managed economies of the USSR and Eastern Europe, and the next step forward for these countries; nor is it the determination of the way to break with capitalism in the West, or the discovery of some 'general laws' governing the transition between capitalism and socialism. Our controversy turns only around two questions: whether socialism as conceived by Marx—i.e. a society ruled by freely associated producers, in which commodity production (market economy), social classes, and the state have withered away—is *feasible*, and whether it is *desirable*—a necessary prerequisite for the maximum possible emancipation and self-realization of the maximum number of human beings. My answer is categorically 'yes' to both questions. Alec Nove's answer is a categorical 'no' to the first question, and a rather hesitant 'no' to the second one. This does not mean that the other questions to which we have alluded are unimportant or irrelevant to the debate about the relative weight which should be given to market mechanisms *hic et nunc*, in the East and in the West. It is quite possible that resolute partisans of 'Marxian socialism' as a society without commodity production advocate an extension and not a restriction of market mechanisms in postcapitalist societies at a given stage, as did Trotsky in the early thirties. We shall come back to that question later. But it is a *different* question from the one whether a society without commodity production is both possible and desirable. If we don't solve that problem first—i.e. the problem of the *goal* of socialists' endeavour—we find ourselves in the unfortunate situation of Louis XVIII's restorationist minister, the Duke of Richelieu, who didn't know where he was going, but was absolutely adamant that he would arrive there.

¹ All references to Nove are to Alec Nove, 'Markets and Socialism', NLR 161, January-February 1987, pp. 98-104.

Market Economy and Economic Fluctuations

Nove begins by making a statement about the lessons of the Soviet experience. He writes: 'Mandel asks: is it appropriate to use evidence culled from Soviet experience? Yes, there were specifically Russian or Soviet factors—backwardness, "bureaucratic misrule". But there are lessons to be learned, concerning (for instance) scale complexity, conflicts between partial and general interest, plan-fulfilment indicators, investment criteria, prices in theory and practice, labour incentives, diseconomies of scale in agriculture, the influence of user needs on plans and on output, the role of regional policy, and so on. While the Soviet record in handling these and other issues (including environmental pollution) may leave much to be desired, it would be foolish to ignore Soviet experience because of a prior decision to classify it as "not socialist"' (p. 99).

Nobody would seriously argue that one should 'ignore' Soviet experience because it is obviously not socialist, i.e. has not led to a classless society.² On the contrary, one should indeed study that experience most carefully, if only to try to avoid the many pitfalls into which bureaucratic mismanagement has led the Soviet economy and society. Our difference with Nove in that respect concerns above all the fact that most of the lessons he wants to draw from the Soviet experience have to be seen *within the framework* of relative backwardness, isolation and bureaucratic mismanagement of the USSR.

The problem is to determine to what extent the shortcomings of the Soviet economy result from the 'principles of central planning' in and of themselves, and to what extent they are rather the products of backwardness and bureaucratic despotism, which can be avoided under more mature circumstances. To give just one example: to what extent are the famous queues in the USSR the result of scarcities flowing *unavoidably* from 'central planning', and to what extent are they the products of the wrong decision systematically to neglect investment in transportation, distribution and agriculture as compared with investment in industry, especially heavy industry? Such a disproportion in investment is neither economically rational nor an automatic product of central planning. On the contrary, it is the proof of immature, wrong, lopsided, 'unplanned', incoherent, wasteful bureaucratic mismanagement. It could be avoided, and will be avoided, in a *democratically* centralized system of workers' management in mature industrialized countries, on an international scale.

This is not at all an argument against drawing upon concrete experience, out of some 'socialist' (certainly not Marxist!) dogmatism and prejudice. On the contrary. But it is an argument in favour of drawing *also* upon the formidable body of statistical data about consumers' and producers' behaviour in the most developed countries of the world—and not just

² The question of whether one should stick to the classical Marxist (even pre-Marxist) definition of socialism as a classless society without commodity production, or whether one should adopt the 'redactionist' definition which equates socialism and the disappearance of private property of the means of production, has been dealt with in our article 'Bureaucracy and Commodity Production', *Quadrature Internationale* No. 24, April 1987.

in the USSR—in order to project possible patterns of behaviour in a socialist world. Indeed, it is our contention that the boot is on the other foot. It is the partisans of the alleged ‘eternal’ advantages of market economy, including of ‘market socialism’, who show an obstinate dogmatism, a growing blindness to empirical data, in the unfolding of the debate about the ‘feasibility’ of socialism, opposing less and less relevant trends (either of the past or of more backward economies) to what really has been going on in the advanced economies during the last forty to fifty years.

This leads us to another boomerang effect of Nove’s argument. He contends that ‘an unregulated market can give rise to large-scale bankruptcies and mass unemployment, which are wasteful ways of registering error. This is why (among other reasons) I enter into dispute with “Chicago” ideologists and those infected with the disease of privatizationitis’ (p. 103). But why does Nove dismiss more than two hundred years of experience of attempts at ‘regulating’ markets, all of which have failed to prevent periodic economic crises, periodic mass unemployment? Why does he hide behind the apologetic formula that ‘an unregulated market can [!] give rise to . . . mass unemployment’, when we have witnessed that phenomenon in all Western countries based upon the market economy during at least twenty-one business cycles since 1825 and are now witnessing it for the twenty-second time? Is it logically inconsistent to insist strongly upon the need to draw lessons from 160 years of ‘real’ international market economy in the Western world?

The Limits of ‘Market Regulation’

The fact that no market economy has been able to avoid the ills of periodic economic catastrophes like mass bankruptcies (mass destruction/devalorization of capital/productive equipment), mass unemployment, periodically declining living standards and periodically increasing moral misery for millions, is of course not accidental. It is related to the very nature of that economic system.

Production for the market is production for *unknown* customers, in *unknown* quantities, and with *unknown* financial results. Nove contends that this is not related to the difference between *ex ante* and *ex post* allocation of overall existing social resources in relation to recognized social needs. This contention strikes us as bizarre to say the least. Isn’t it precisely the nature of the market that neither producing nor consumer units know each other’s decisions in advance, i.e. *a priori*? But doesn’t the axle-producing unit of a car factory know in advance exactly how many axles the factory needs for the number of cars it plans to produce?

When Adam Smith and other classics maintain that the ‘invisible hand’ of the market permits supply and demand to balance, they imply that this always happens *post festum*, i.e. *a posteriori*. If freely formed prices were not *signals* for ‘economic agents’ to *modify* their behaviour, what would be their usefulness for those who advocate market economy? But *modification* of behaviour implies the need to correct *previous* decisions (to change the quantities produced, to adapt their qualities or product-mix, to transform production techniques, to modify labour/fixed capital

relations in inputs, etc.)—that is, it implies a *basic indeterminacy* (uncertainty) of previously taken *decisions*.

Nove states that the car factory's *final* product is, after all, a commodity which has to be sold through the market, and that its sale is uncertain. Perfectly true. But, far from weakening it, this obvious fact strengthens our point about the basic difference between *a priori* and *a posteriori* allocation of resources, or, if one prefers, *direct* and *market-determined* allocation. If car sales go down from 2 million to 1.5 million, the market has imposed a reallocation of resources. But the market *cannot* impose the output of 1 million axles or 7 million wheels for 1.5 million cars. *Inside* the factory *it is not* the market which rules, but technical coefficients. Allocation of resources *flows automatically and rigidly* from the decision to produce x number of cars, *does not* fluctuate as a function of inter-departmental 'sales figures' or 'profits'. At the level of society in its totality, deliberately established priorities likewise rule with *a priori* allocation. From uncertainty, business cycle fluctuations unavoidably flow. You *cannot* reduce output or introduce revolutionary labour-saving production techniques³ without causing unemployment. You *cannot* provoke sharp sudden drops in prices (in profit margins and in rates of profits) without provoking a number of bankruptcies. All these unavoidable evils of market uncertainty are strongly enhanced by private property and competition. They make *overshooting* inevitable. Overshooting amplifies the extent of the fluctuations.

No business firm can afford to act from the point of view of maximizing the 'general good' or the 'social dividend'. Under the pressure of competition, *all are forced to increase* investment 'when the going is good' (i.e. when the markets and profits seem to be expanding), and likewise to *reduce* investment when a crisis has broken out, *regardless* of the overall effect this behaviour has on the economy as a whole. So we periodically move from 'too much' investment (near-full employment, overheating) to 'too little' investment (massive unemployment). 'Market regulation', i.e. intervention by the public sector, could only neutralize these fluctuations under two sets of circumstances. It could do so after they have occurred, in which case they would not have been avoided, but only limited in time. The correction could only be effective if public investment were a huge—and growing—part of total investment, and if the public sector were largely insulated from the consequences of the business cycle, i.e. if it were essentially of a non-market nature. The second alternative would be to *prevent* evils like unemployment from occurring, by increasing public investment before the decline of private investment sets in. But apart from the perverse effects of such behaviour on the overall economy—unless private investment has already become marginal—it is impossible to make an exact prediction about the scale and timing of the downturn in private investment, precisely because it abstracts from the existence of real uncertainty.

³ Incidentally, these nearly always imply a substantial medium-term and long-term increase in the volume of output which has to be sold at the average rate of profit. Hence the dual nature of any adequate theory of crisis (of the business cycle), which has to examine not only value production but also profit realization, not only the value (labour quantities) stream and structure, but also the monetary demand (purchasing power) generated by that production stream and its class structure, and the proportionate (or disproportionate) relations between them.

So efficient 'market regulation' is just impossible: theoretical analysis confirms the historical record. To want to maintain a sizeable market economy while avoiding mass unemployment and numerous bankruptcies is the same as eating your cake and selling it too.

Social Priorities and Limited Resources

This is all the more the case as total resources are always limited. Any use of them by the public sector or for non-market purposes of direct need satisfaction automatically restricts their availability for market-oriented production. Now Nove himself states that 'health, education, (public) housing, posts, urban public transport, environmental protection, water supply, street lighting and cleaning, parks, etc., are not (should not be) provided because of a desire to make money' (p. 102). If one adds—as one should—cultural and information (communication) services and basic food and clothing to that list, one would already cover between 70 and 80 per cent of civilian expenditure in most of the industrialized countries of the world, leaving only a minor sector of the economy at the disposal of market relations, in any case. It is our strong conviction that for social and psychological reasons of overriding importance, basic food, clothing, average housing for all, and cultural goods, *should* be included in the list of those products and services whose distribution should be based upon need satisfaction in the form of use-values only, i.e. should be disconnected from money/market relations.

For thousands of years humankind has lived in the shadow of hunger, insecurity, illness, epidemics, natural catastrophes and fear of sudden disastrous decline in their basic need satisfaction. There are only two essentially different economic mechanisms through which economic security can be assured on a long-term basis: either through the accumulation of large sums (fortunes) of money through individual strife, or through a social set-up which automatically guarantees each individual the satisfaction of their basic needs, independently of their individual situation and effort. The first mechanism fosters social behaviour (including social values and, if one wants to use that term, a social *ethos*) based upon competition, egoism, aggression, universal corruption (venality) of social life growing alienation, in short the rat race. This is not only true in capitalist society, where it obviously reaches its climax. It is also true under pre-capitalist petty-commodity production. It surely applies to post-capitalist partial commodity production, as the examples of the USSR, Eastern Europe and China strikingly confirm. While this might be inevitable as long as material conditions do not permit a radical withering away of market and money relations, it is certainly a social evil which imposes massive physical and mental hardships on millions of human beings.⁴ It also leads to increasing social dislocation and global dangers.

⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 28 February 1988, quotes the deputy chief justice of the People's Republic of China, Lin Zhun, as stating that in 1987, 5,200 'traders of women' were brought to trial—150 per cent more than in 1986—but that figure only represented a fraction of the number operating. So you have white slavery under 'market socialism', and to a growing extent! Is that surprising when the average wage is around £20 month, but the sellers of young girls from impoverished regions and areas into prostitution can get as much as £5,000?

At a time when the four horsemen of the apocalypse—nuclear annihilation of life; destruction of the eco-systems and the biosphere; hunger in the Third World; massive impoverishment among the northern hemisphere's victims of the 'dual society'—are breathing down our necks, humankind simply cannot afford anything like the present doses of competitive and aggressive behaviour. A social set-up which fosters the opposite *ethos* of cooperation, solidarity and universally applied moral rules, in the first place complete disarmament, has become a *sine qua non* for the sheer physical survival of humanity. Cooperative behaviour, i.e. socialism or misery and barbarism, with a palpable risk of actual extinction: this is the choice before humankind today. To believe you can foster worldwide cooperative behaviour leading to the universal respect of common moral rules, without basic material security and need satisfaction, is utopia of the worst kind. To believe you can assure need satisfaction through greed, private acquisitive drives, universal competition and strife, and simultaneously foster growing cooperation, solidarity and respect of universal ethical rules, is again a case of having your cake and eating it.

The same social-priorities argument against market mechanisms applies to the case of producers' private initiatives raised by Nove: 'Any citizen or group of citizens that wishes, at their risk, to provide a good or service which they believe to be needed, should be in principle free to do so, be able to obtain the required material means and to derive an income (profit) if they succeed. That should be an integral part of their rights and freedoms *as producers*, rights which would be infringed if a "socialist police" were ordered to stop them. If the goods and services in question were satisfactorily provided within the public sector, the profitable opportunity would not exist' (pp. 101–102). One is rather amazed that after two hundred years of socialist criticism of wage-labour, Nove, following here the liberal (neo-liberal) *credo*, fails to make the obvious connection between the various mechanisms which enable 'free enterprise' to function in a satisfactory way *for some*, a small and declining minority that is.⁵

The real history of *capitalist* 'free enterprise', with high technology and wage labour, is *not* the history of more and more people getting the 'required material means'. On the contrary: it is the history of more and more people being *cut off* from the 'required means' of producing their livelihood on their own account, and in the first place from free access to land. 'Free enterprise' with wage labour for the benefit of the few was established by destroying 'free enterprise' without wage labour, for the benefit of the many. Before economic mechanisms—the specific laws of product appropriation and revenue redistribution of the capitalist mode of production—normalized the reproduction of massive wage labour, this came about by violence, war, conquest, plunder, robbery, piracy, widespread oppression. The substitution of *economic compulsion* for *direct physical violence* does not change the unjust nature of the process,

⁵ We just stress that independent producers and entrepreneurs are now down to less than 10 per cent of the active population in the USA, Britain and Sweden, and to less than 15 per cent in several other countries.

all the more so because economic compulsion itself cannot function durably without the periodic intervention of physical repression.

What was true yesterday would also be true tomorrow. No large-scale reintroduction of a real labour market in a socialized, not to say socialist commonwealth would be possible without economic and political compulsion against the mass of producers. As long as these were all *guaranteed* an adequate average level of consumption—the satisfaction of all basic needs and a growing level of comfort and culture—neither the means nor the incentives would be available for providing the ‘required material means’ for *capitalist* ‘free entrepreneurs’, operating with wage labour, as opposed to *individual* entrepreneurs working with their own hands.

No ‘socialist police’ would be necessary to ensure that rule. In a socialist commonwealth, a sum total of social institutions and values would of course strongly condition people against the pursuit of individual enrichment. But the strongest safeguard would be the actual power of the free associate producers over all the production units manufacturing means of production, their *a priori* decision to *guarantee* a decent minimum income (consumption level) to *all*. Would-be capitalists would have to offer wages substantially above that guaranteed annual income. There wouldn’t be many offers; there wouldn’t be many takers. Only if you destroyed that freedom from want for the great majority would you assure the freedom for a few entrepreneurs to have a large number of wage labourers.

Is this ‘majority despotism’? You can call it that if you want to, as you can call all majority rule ‘despotic’ from the point of view of the minority. But the ‘hardship’ imposed upon the would-be capitalist entrepreneurs would be mild, to say the least, compared with the hardships that capitalism imposes on the unemployed and the poor. They too would enjoy the guaranteed standard of consumption. They would just have to forego some additional luxuries. They would also be masters of more and more free time, which they could use for any form of individual or cooperative activity—including production—in which they wished to engage. As the alternative despotism of wage labour, with its disruptive and destructive logic, imposes much graver hardships on much larger numbers, ‘majority despotism’ certainly appears a lesser evil in the search for a just society than ‘minority despotism’, including market despotism.

Money, Consumer Satisfaction and Social Priorities

Nove maintains that market relations could only be eliminated for social services and a few homogeneous goods like water and electrical power (p. 102). He ignores our argument that they could likewise wither away for all goods whose elasticity of demand is falling towards zero or has even become negative. The fact that there are dozens of varieties of bread, or hundreds of patterns of socks, does not make overall consumption of these goods less predictable in the light of existing statistical evidence. And if their output no longer takes place for profit but is based upon consumers’ choices and orders—with public and contradic-

tory quality control in addition—the result will be much greater consumer satisfaction and variety than are current under the market system. We can give many reasons for this; we shall concentrate on a few.

First, under a commercial system, distribution costs are artificially blown up at the expense of the consumer, by the fact that the various intermediaries each interpolate their profit margins and that advertising costs—whose effect is very often to mislead, manipulate and frustrate the public—are imposed on the consumers too. Recently, the Belgian Trade Association of hotels, restaurants, cafés and bars (HORECA) admitted that in a cup of coffee costing 35 francs (\$1.00) in a bar the price of the actual coffee was only 0.5 francs, i.e. 1.5 per cent. Reducing the distribution costs to the material outlays and the consumer income of those occupied in that sector would make possible a substantial increase in distribution units, much easier access by individual consumers to these outlets, and a greater feedback between consumer wishes, distribution access and production variety than under the profit system, at less cost to the community.

Second, under the profit system, it is not the average cost but the margin of profit which determines whether a good is produced or not. Nove imprudently takes up the question of the publication of *New Left Review*—i.e. of the freedom of the press—which ‘requires the acquisition and use of material inputs, means of production that have alternative uses’ (p. 102). But surely if the state can today decide *a priori* to devote 6 per cent of its resources to the production and administration of arms, or if in Nove’s ‘market socialism’ the collectivity decides to devote x or y per cent of national resources to education, health, public transport, public housing, etc., why should the allocation of resources for a free and varied press be left to the market? Why can’t the community decide *a priori* to devote say 0.5 per cent or 1 per cent or 1.5 per cent of the available resources to ensure that there are enough print-shops, printing workers, newsprint and newstands to give every set number of consumers the daily, weekly, monthly papers of their choice—with this set number much lower than under present commercial circumstances, in order to make possible much greater diversity (plurality) of the press than exists today? The alternative is precisely a growing *curtailment* of press freedom through centralized control, by either big capital, the state, or both. A couple of years ago, the implications of the market system for the freedom of the press were ominously illustrated in France. A decline in the print-run of hardly 5 per cent by one of the world’s greatest newspapers, *Le Monde*, threatened to deprive more than one million people of their preferred daily reading. Was that really the best way to ensure consumers’ choice and diversity?

Third, under profit-oriented market production, monopolistic or oligopolistic firms often have an interest in substituting the output of one commodity for another, if the second one promises to increase profits, regardless of consumer preferences, and even if the first commodity is still profitable. So the consumers might see themselves deprived of a wanted commodity just because it is no longer produced. This is what has already started to happen with the move from long-playing records to Compact Discs.

It is rather significant that neither Nove nor any other of the proponents of 'market socialism' has much comment to make on the *inevitable* tendency of market competition to cut out the *weakest* competitors, i.e. to lead to monopoly, which in turn leads to competition between the monopolies on a higher level, which in turn leads to even larger (today *essentially* multi-national) monopolies. These processes of concentration and centralization of capital have regularly accompanied the development of market economy since the days prior to industrial capitalism, i.e. for at least four hundred years. Can that practical experience of 'actual existing market economy' be dismissed out of hand?⁶ It is just not true that market relations ensure greater consumer sovereignty in a richer community, once basic elementary needs have been satisfied. The very opposite is the case.

Nove again and again makes the point that 'money . . . provides an indispensable measuring rod, for assessing . . . the intensity of wants' (p. 103). But does it really? Even from the individual's point of view, the proposition is dubious, to say the least. If one spends *additional* income on a more expensive holiday rather than on a piano for one's child, this is a function of many factors, in which the cost of production of different goods plays rather a key role.

If the proposition is already dubious at a micro-economic level, it is thoroughly wrong from a macro-economic point of view. As long as purchasing power—aggregate demand—is *unequally* divided, output will go where the more money and the quicker profits are to be found, not where wants are more intense. Surely, nobody will seriously argue that the need for second residences is more intense than the need for housing of the homeless. Yet second residences (and luxury houses) are built on a large scale, while there are still millions of homeless in the richer countries, not to speak of the rest of the world. And what about the 'intensity of need' for food among the Third World's hungry people, as against the need for a second television set or home computer among the affluent middle classes of the West? Yet far more resources are devoted through market mechanisms to satisfy the latter need than the former.

If the proposition is wrong in macro-economic terms, it is even more wrong from a macro-social point of view, which aggregates *all* social costs of certain allocation choices imposed by market forces, and their implications for *various simultaneously existing wants*, i.e. raises the problem of social priorities. Here, money is *not* a rational measuring rod—unless we accept the ultimate inhuman logic of monetary 'cost-benefit' analysis,

⁶ Cases of monopoly are on the increase with regard to commodities which have to cover key social consumer needs—the contrary myth notwithstanding. Their implications and potential are ominous. Prof. M. F. Perutz, writing in *The New York Review of Books*, 3 March 1988, reveals that while in 1964 twelve firms made vaccines in the USA, by 1984 that number had shrunk to five. The concentration came at a time when advances in molecular biology were leading to the development of vaccines against malaria, hepatitis-B, cholera, and other diseases that affect the greatest number of people in the world, and when there is a desperate need for a vaccine to stem the AIDS epidemic. Thus near-monopoly position has enabled the few remaining firms to increase the price of a vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough from 16 cents to 10 dollars, a sixty-fold increase, using various excuses like the rising costs of litigation.

by computing the 'value' of the lives and deaths of thousands of human beings based upon the capitalization of their future 'earnings' (including those of children whose future professions are still unknown).

The most devastating example in that respect is the privately owned motor car which, as a means of transport between home and workplace, home or shopping centre, is a source of economic waste of monstrous proportions.⁷ Here you have a fleet of tens of millions of cars with four or five seats, but which only transport one or two persons each, which do not run more than one to two hours a day and obstruct our cities for eight, nine or even twenty-two hours, making traffic slower and slower if not paralysing it altogether, and simultaneously polluting town and countryside under an increasingly murderous cloud of poisonous exhaust. In addition, this irresponsibly and unprofessionally conducted fleet is an instrument of mass murder on a scale only comparable to big wars. In fact, in the last three decades more people have been killed and maimed worldwide by the motor car than in the whole of World War II⁸

Would it not be preferable from a *macro-social* point of view, to have the thoroughfares of all cities covered by a fleet of small buses passing, say, every three minutes, which would guarantee all prospective passengers a comfortable seat and reduce parking problems and pollution to ten per cent of today's levels—especially if they were electric buses—and would reduce energy expenditure by the same order? And would not such a needs-satisfying system cut across the so-called 'acquisitive instinct' if it was *free of charge* for all citizens, i.e. if the community decided *a priori* to allocate two or three per cent of its available resources to guaranteeing that free service to all? How many people would, under these circumstances, still buy private cars and *pay* privately for petrol? You wouldn't need any 'police' to 'forbid' such purchases. Cost comparison for the consumer would do the job for the majority, and prohibitive parking tickets would also contribute.

Even if this was accompanied by diseconomies of scale in the output of buses and cars, and even if publicly owned factories were micro-economically less efficient than today's private auto corporations—an assumption which we do not consider proven at all—the *overall* results from this radical reduction in the daily mad rush towards polluting immobility would still imply a huge saving in material resources and human lives. Consumer satisfaction—i.e. need satisfaction—would be on the rise. Money would play exactly the opposite of the role generally attributed to it: that of a deterrent, not a stimulant. Again: by what right would any tyrannical advocate of 'market socialism' *forbid* a community to decide by majority vote in favour of such a free, comfortable and efficient public transportation system, administered in a largely

⁷ The privately driven car is an instrument of autonomy (freedom) in the realm of leisure. But this function can be fulfilled by a fleet of cars not privately owned but put at the disposal of those who actually use them *when they need them*. This would still involve a big macro-economic reduction of resources devoted to that function.

⁸ A splendid overall socialist critique of the private motor car is given in our friend Winfried Wolf's *magnus opus: Eisenbahn und Autobahn*, Hamburg 1987.

decentralized communal way, and needing no pyramidal bureaucracy whatsoever, or certainly far less than the huge monopolies of today?

Utque Tertium Datur!

Contesting that there is a viable and desirable alternative to both bureaucratic centralization and 'market socialism', Nove rejects the 'tertium datur' on the grounds that centralized allocation of resources (essentially material inputs) is unavoidable in a contemporary economy: 'Even quite simple products require large numbers of sometimes highly specific inputs, and how can one ensure that the meetings of delegates in respect of each of thousands of inputs result in input-output coherence, without a hierarchical pyramid of authority—unless inputs can be purchased and the pyramid rendered unnecessary? Alas, *tertium non datur*.' This is just a return to square one, as if all the previous discussion had not taken place at all.

In the first place, the market does *not* automatically lead to 'input-output coherence'. Overcapacities and scarcities exist side by side periodically. The latter explode into booms, the former into busts. Economic fluctuations, tied for two centuries to the 'actually existing market economy', are proof of huge 'input-output' *incoherences*.

In the second place, most of the 'thousands' of inputs are not dependent upon price fluctuations. 'Purchasing' is only formal, not choice determining. Inputs are made to order, generally with no price competition at all, and are dependent on previously established technical specifications. Only in the case of grave failure (bad quality, non-respect of delivery times, flagrant overcharging) will there be any serious dispute.

In the third place, *central* allocation of resources—which is indeed unavoidable—is not identical with *detailed* allocation, as little as decentralized allocation is identical with allocation as a function of price fluctuations, i.e. through the market. Nove does not answer our argument that *articulated* self-management is perfectly possible. A *national* (or international) congress of delegates only has democratically to decide what part of GNP is devoted to each of say twenty or thirty key industrial-social branches, choosing between different *coherent* input-output variants.⁹ Then it delegates more detailed planning of, say, the steel or leather industry or education to representatives of these industries and services gathering in other congresses (including consumer representatives). These then delegate still more detailed decisions to regional, local and enterprise councils. *Alternative demands on limited resources are neither ignored nor hidden*. They are *democratically* settled at *different* levels. No rigid hierarchic structures arise from such institutions. This expressly guarantees producer/consumer sovereignty—i.e. self-

⁹ How such social priorities impose themselves even under capitalism is strikingly revealed by the current preparations for the 'free common market of 1992' among twelve nations of Western Europe. They concern among other things the establishment of 300 'internal market directives' which will govern the daily lives and commerce of 330 million people, involving such different phenomena as veterinary controls, cosmetics, pesticides, crimes, the quantity of water, the depth of tread in tyres, lorry weight, toys' safety, life insurance, car exhausts, asbestos pollution, mobile telephones, lawnmower noise, insurance regulations, educational qualifications, etc., etc.

determination, freedom in the real sense of the word—against both the tyranny of blind market forces and the tyranny of arrogant technocrats or bureaucrats. Surely this is entirely feasible?¹⁰ Would it lead to excessive politicization? Perhaps. But politicization in a *free* society, with political pluralism, free access to the media, constant publicity and *public control*, is certainly a lesser evil than huge waste as a result of massive unemployment or bureaucratic mismanagement.

Alec Nove's belief in the need for 'market socialism' arises in part from the idea that the self-administration of citizens in a complex modern economy is somehow unrealistic. But the socialist argument for self-administration presupposes ancillary social conditions not considered by Nove: freely available higher education, a radical shortening of the working week, a diffusion of information technology among groups of producers and consumers, wide access to the media of communication. Conflicts of opinion and interest would no doubt still arise but that is why socialists must be committed to a pluralist democracy.

The issue becomes clearer if we go back to the basic definition of exploitation as institutionalized inequality. The proponents of 'market socialism' generally concede that market relations will systematically generate inequality; indeed in the Soviet Union and China today are to be found advocates of marketization who proclaim the necessity of inequality, often doing so with even less qualification than Alec Nove. In the final analysis exploitation means that many have to work long hours so that a few can consume more and live better. The majority have to be coaxed into consenting to exploitation. If they gradually see through the coaxing, they have to be coerced. If they end by rebelling against 'purely economic' coercion, then they have to be persuaded by extra-economic coercion. That is how the state arises in the service of exploitation. So we can conclude with a warning. Some opt for 'market socialism' out of ferocious opposition to bureaucracy. But they are fated to end up reinventing the state as an apparatus of repression, set apart from the mass of citizens. Those who believe that the withering away of commodity production is utopian, will find themselves forced to conclude that the withering away of the state is utopian too.

Of Human Freedom

Here we are back at the heart of the debate. It is our contention that this essentially concerns not the greatest possible economic efficiency (is that measurable at all, without a much more precise definition than economists generally offer?) but the greatest possible human freedom, or emancipation from externally imposed constraints on individuals, whether these are economic or political or socio-cultural. It is a debate about self-determination as *the* goal of human existence.

¹⁰ The computer age—i.e. the third technological revolution—greatly facilitates workers' management. 'In a manufacturing plant, you suddenly have information in the hands of the people who run the machines, it's no longer reserved for people two or three rungs up the hierarchy', Mr Eberle (Proctor & Gamble's former vice-president of manufacturing) said. 'The first-level supervisors don't appreciate the power of this information until it gets in the workers' hands. Then their resistance is enormous' (*International Herald Tribune*, 15 February 1981).

It is self-evident for us that without satisfaction of the basic human needs for all, freedom and self-determination are impossible. Economic efficiency as a means to guarantee the satisfaction of these basic needs without distinction or discrimination, therefore makes perfect sense within that conceptual framework. But as a *permanent* goal of human endeavour superimposed upon all other considerations and motivations, it becomes irrational and increasingly self-defeating.

So the real debate turns on this precise question: once basic needs are satisfied, should the goal of the greatest possible economic efficiency, regardless of its individual and social costs, continue to reign supreme, or should it be subordinated to such goals as a radical reduction of the working week (the working time during the whole adult life), a radical reduction of the social division of labour between administrators and administrated, an explosive expansion of creative leisure, the safeguarding of the natural environment, the struggle against physical and mental afflictions, etc.?

Those who contend that all this is utopian are in reality saying that humankind is condemned to submit to the tyranny of 'objective economic laws' and social inequality under whatever circumstances. They add that a refusal to accept these constraints would lead to unacceptably low standards of need satisfaction. This is just a rehash of the superstition of original sin. Linked to that prejudice there is the myth of the *homo oeconomicus*, which is nothing but an attempt to generalize for human existence throughout time and space what is the behavioural pattern of competitive bourgeois (big ones and small ones), acquired relatively recently in human history. There is no scientific basis for such contentions.

'Marxian socialism' as both Nove and myself understand it means just that: the emancipation of the freely associated producers from the *obligation* to use material and human resources according to some 'eternal economic laws'. It is a society in which these producers/consumers freely determine their priorities, social as well as economic. If they want to forego the second television set in exchange for more leisure or less strenuous and less monotonous work, they have the perfect right to do so. Nobody should *dictate* these preferences to them, neither markets nor experts, nor scientists/philosophers, nor charismatic leaders, nor parties, all of whom history has proven to be anything but omniscient. But they should have the right to make these decisions freely, by the light of their own consciousness and sensibility. That is what human freedom is all about. That is what socialist planning is all about.

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review

Lynn Garafola

The Last Intellectuals

The 1980s have not been good to American intellectuals of the Left. The election of Ronald Reagan brought neo-conservatives to power, and with them a host of new institutions—most notably, the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute—that set about rewriting the intellectual agenda. In the ensuing debate about the purposes and failings of American education, the New Left found itself the principal scapegoat. Johnnie can't read, Susie can't write, Dick and Jane haven't a clue when the Civil War took place or why tea was dumped into Boston harbour or what books make up the Great Tradition. A semi-literate citizenry was graduating from America's high schools. Blaming this on the 1960s was easier than teaching Susie to write or Dick to think. But then, the debate was not really about education. At stake was the meaning of Americanism, the subversion, as the Right saw it, of young minds by liberal ideas of pluralism, individualism, and equality. To the chagrin of neo-conservatives, young Americans knew more about Sojourner Truth and the slaughter of the Indians than about Teddy Roosevelt's rough-riding imperialists and America's manifest destiny. Kids like these would never fight the next Vietnam War.

With Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*,¹ trashing the New Left has become a suburban pastime. Thirty-eight weeks (as of 1 March) on the *New York Times* best-seller list, the book takes its readers on a journey through the highways and byways of philosophy to prove what Americans already know: that the New Left destroyed the university as an ivory tower of intellect. Bloom has splendid credentials for his role as a Jeremiah of the Reaganite middle class. He is a professor at the University of Chicago, co-director of its John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy. Before that, he taught philosophy at Cornell University. With four books to his credit (never mind that three are translations), he is Middle America's image of a blue-ribbon scholar. Bloom's brief is simple: cultural relativism, which has rushed to fill the intellectual vacuum created by the student rebellions of the 1960s, has 'extinguished', as he puts it, 'the real motive of education, the search for a good life.'

¹ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, foreword by Saul Bellow, New York 1987

Bloom's rather ascetic good life, a philosopher's symposium of the elect, won't appeal to many of his readers. But what is seductive is the way Bloom represents—or misrepresents—its demise. In the opening and closing sections, he rounds up the usual suspects: radicals in the civil rights movement, who 'succeeded in promoting a popular conviction that the Founding was, and the American principles are, racist'; the 'advanced Left,' which, in advocating individual self-fulfilment, made 'country, religion, family, ideas of civilization . . . [lose] their compelling force'; rock music, which exalted sexual desire at the expense of love, eros, shame, and parental authority; black power, which gave 'the license for a new segregationism.' But Bloom reserves his harshest words for feminism, which not only destroyed the 'vitality of classic texts' (by declaring that '*all* literature . . . is sexist'), but in advocating equality, demystified sex relations and gave us 'reproduction without family.'

Bloom's method is as loose as his prose. His book has no footnotes, and most of the time he doesn't bother to indicate sources. But what makes his claim to truth so spurious—and so appealing to readers who equate feminism with unisex toilets and affirmative action with keeping white males out of medical school—is the way he rewrites history to reinforce old prejudices. The most egregious instance of this is his treatment of racism. Bloom baldly states that 'racial justice is an imperative of our theory and historical practice.' 'Under pressure from students the Founding was understood to be racist, and the very instrument that condemned slavery and racism was broken.' Obviously, Bloom hasn't read the Constitution too closely, or not at least those provisions—the three-fifths clause, the fugitive slave clause, and the African slave trade clause—that directly or indirectly made the entire country complicit in maintaining the stability of the slave system. His discussion of the effects of McCarthyism is equally specious. In major universities, he asserts, the 'barbarians' had 'no effect whatsoever on curriculum or appointments. The range of thought and speech that took place within them was unaffected.' This may have been true at some institutions, including Bloom's alma mater, the University of Chicago. But as Ellen W. Schrecker makes clear in *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*,² McCarthyism on campuses of the 1950s is no myth: at scores of institutions, professors were dismissed and their colleagues pressured into conformity. To state, as Bloom does, that 'professors were not fired, and they taught what they pleased in their classrooms,' is simply to falsify history. But Bloom is not interested in the Right's suppression of intellectual freedom, only the Left's.

Again and again, Bloom returns to the seminal event of his adult life: the student rebellion at Cornell in 1969, when gun-toting adherents of black power and thousands of white allies turned the university over to the 'mob'. For Bloom the consequences of that takeover—a symbol for student uprisings throughout the country—were tragic. Standards were lowered; requirements abolished; the distinction between educated and uneducated levelled. The entire American educational structure collapsed. The sins of the sixties had lasting effects. In today's classrooms, Bloom writes, students 'are unified only in their relativism

² Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, New York 1986

and in their allegiance to equality'—moral imperatives that constitute the sole claim to virtue. Truth has no meaning; absolutes are greeted with horror. 'The point is not to . . . really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all.'

As Bloom himself admits, relativism has a long history. The Enlightenment made it a touchstone of modern thought, and it is embedded in the tradition of heterodoxy that began with Renaissance humanism. Bloom doesn't reject the Enlightenment (which, after all, gave rise to his beloved university), but he is determined to prove that absolutism in thought and elitism in social practice are compatible with its theory of natural rights. This he never quite manages. Craving heroes, he trots out Homer, Buddha, and Achilles, as if these real and imaginary figures were the makers of civilization. And again and again, he rues the absence of an aristocracy, as if inherited privilege were a condition for free thought and the existence of an intellectual elite. The contradictions don't trouble him. Nor is he troubled by the political implications of his argument: the buttressing of right-wing ideology and plutocratic privilege.

The book's popularity stems from a widespread sense that American education has failed. Professors stunned by students incapable of writing a term paper, suburban parents who cannot understand why their children can't read (even as they park them in front of a television set for six hours a day) are mesmerized by Bloom's combination of apparent erudition and simplistic Reaganite solution (a return to the Great Books). But the book's success also reflects a more disturbing phenomenon. The 1960s have passed into history. The wounds they opened, however, continue to fester. Just as society at large has yet to come to terms with the vast social changes of that decade, so on campuses there are many who yearn to turn back the clock to the ivied eden of the 1950s. 'We are two nations,' Vag says at the end of John Dos Passos's *USA*. At today's universities, Left and Right gaze at one another across an unbridgeable divide.

Not all those who blame the New Left for the demise of American intellectual life, however, hail from the Right. In *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*,³ Russell Jacoby, a self-proclaimed leftist, gives the theme a twist borrowed from one of the newer theories of crime: blame the victim. Jacoby's book, touted in recent ads as a companion piece to Bloom's, opens with a question. Where is the younger generation of intellectuals? Later chapters refine the question. Why haven't the New York intellectuals reproduced themselves? For Jacoby, the answer lies in the academy, which New Leftists joined in droves in the 1960s and 1970s. 'New academics wrote books and articles with an eye to their bulk—the findings, the arguments, the facts, the conclusions.' 'In their haste, they did not linger over the text. Academic intellectual did not cherish direct or elegant writing; they did not disdain it, but it hardly mattered. Most scholarly literature included summaries of the argument or findings; the fact of publication far outweighed any quibbling over style. These imperatives increasingly

³ Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*, New York 1987

determined how professors both read and wrote; they cared for substance, not form. Academic writing developed into unreadable communiqués sweetened by thanks to colleagues and superiors.’

In contrast to their predecessors, young intellectuals no longer wrote for periodicals that addressed a general public. Instead, they published in specialist journals read by a specialist public. Eschewing ‘public prose’ for specialist jargon, they became invisible to the public at large. Unlike Daniel Bell or Edmund Wilson, intellectuals of the New Left ceased to be ‘public intellectuals’. In fact, in becoming academics, they ceased to be intellectuals at all.

Jacoby defines a public intellectual principally by where he or she publishes—the ‘influential’ periodicals read by a general audience. In this category he lumps *Commentary*, *Partisan Review*, *The New Republic*, *Harper’s*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Fortune*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *The New York Review of Books*. For a radical, this is an odd list. Not only does it exclude all radical publications, but it excludes even liberal ones—*The Village Voice* and *Mother Jones*, for instance—where leftists are apt to publish. (*The Nation*, another such journal, is sometimes on and sometimes off Jacoby’s ever-changing list.) What it does include are periodicals openly hostile to radical thought (*Commentary*, *Partisan Review*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*) or largely oblivious of it (*Harper’s*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Fortune*, *The New York Times Book Review*). Writers write to get published, not to stuff their drawers with pink slips. But only in his last chapter does Jacoby even consider the possibility (which he then rejects) that exclusion by editors may have something to do with the ‘invisibility’ of younger intellectuals whose politics are left-wing.

The reason Jacoby can’t find young radical intellectuals is that he looks for them in the wrong places. Had he cast his net a little more widely, he would have discovered any number of publications where radicals routinely write for a non-specialist public. A few have already been mentioned; there are many more: *Commonweal*, *The Progressive*, *In These Times*, *Cineaste*, *October*, *Art in America*, *Dissent*, *Grand Street*, *Raritan*, *Signs, Ms.*, *The Advocate*, *The Drama Review*, *Performing Arts Journal*. Some of these are magazines; some are tabloids; several are intellectual journals. A few have venerable histories. Many, however, are newcomers, with interests and practices that trace their origin to the New Left and counterculture of the 1960s. This is reflected in the attention paid to culture and gender, the focus, individually, of several of these periodicals. Taken together, they record a sea-change in the content of leftist thought since the 1950s—the redefinition of politics to include more than world events, and the displacement of literature by the visual and performing arts.

Jacoby mistakes these fundamental changes in intellectual life for an absence of intellectual life, and this is the fatal flaw in his argument. What he wants is an intelligentsia in the image of the New York intellectuals—that tight-knit group of literary men that coalesced around *Partisan Review* in the 1930s and 1940s. (I emphasize literary, because Jacoby completely ignores those New York intellectuals—Meyer

Shapiro, Clement Greenberg, Lincoln Kirstein, Carl Van Vechten—whose interests centred on the arts of sight and sound.) Mostly male, mostly Jewish, and (in the beginning at least) mostly left, the New York intellectuals define the style, practice, and physiognomy of Jacoby's ideal. No matter that New York has changed, that the social and economic configuration that gave rise to the group—free college education and an upwardly mobile Jewish working class—has ceased to exist, or that most of Jacoby's heroes have moved steadily to the right. No matter that they enlisted in the Cold War crusade against Communism, or that the modernism they championed has become an ideology of orthodoxy and the arts they ignored now define the avant-garde. Jacoby rues the fact that the New York intellectuals failed to reproduce themselves. But he overlooks the abysmal record of their behaviour in the 1960s—the fulminations against the counterculture, the denunciations of the New Left, the jeremiads against feminism. If the New York intellectuals left no heirs, the fault is largely their own.

But nothing can dull their romance for Jacoby. The names spill from his pen in a litany: Alfred Kazin, Daniel Bell, Gore Vidal (an exception to the general rightward trend), Sidney Hook, Nathan Glazer, Mary McCarthy, Dwight Macdonald, Norman Mailer, Jason Epstein, Lionel Trilling, Norman Podhoretz, Delmore Schwartz, Edmund Wilson, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Again and again, he recounts their exemplary progress from the little magazines of the 1930s to the general interest periodicals of the 1950s. Honing their skills as writers, they mastered the art of the elegant essay and wrote books that counted. But was prose the only reason for their celebrity status? Might there have been some link between the rightward drift of their politics and their acceptance in the commercial media? Might the other side of their visibility have been the invisibility of comrades who weren't anti-Communists? In other words, does the stature of some New York intellectuals depend in part on the silencing of others? Taking this line of thought one step further, might the silenced generation—rather than its noisier counterpart—be the natural parent of today's younger left intelligentsia?

Jacoby makes much of the fact that neither he nor his friends can think of a single young intellectual comparable to yesterday's Trillings, Bells, and Vidals. Well, here are some suggestions. True, the candidates look different from Jacoby's heroes: many are women, some are black, several write about the arts or are artists in their own right. Consider Martin Duberman, an academic who writes drama (*In Black America*), cultural history (*Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*), biography (*Charles Francis Adams*) and a forthcoming life of Paul Robeson), and journalist (for years he has produced a weekly column on gay history for *The New York Native*). Or Edward Said, that very public professor who has written one of the best recent books of literary criticism (*Orientalism*) as well as a respected volume (*After the Last Sky*) and many articles about the Palestinians (which have made him *persona non grata* in many quarters, including *The New York Review of Books*). Or Eric Foner, author of *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* and *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, widely read volumes integrating the 'new history' within a radical framework. Or novelists Toni

Morrison and Alice Walker, black women whose fiction speaks as much to subway straphangers as to intellectuals. Or *October* editor Rosalind Krauss, an art critic so well-known that a *New Yorker* profile (on someone else) opened with a description of her living room. Or Paul Buhle, that New Left maverick, a founder of *Radical America* and *Cultural Correspondence*, and author of numerous articles on popular culture past and present. Or Richard Kostelanetz, Sally Banes, Cornel West, Barbara Ehrenreich, Mike Davis, Peter Steinfeld, Lucy Lippard, Sean Wilentz, Elizabeth Kendall, Thomas Bender, Kirkpatrick Sale, E. Ann Kaplan—all radical, all youngish, all highly visible, even if they are ‘invisible’ to Jacoby and don’t publish in *Commentary* or *The Atlantic*.

Many (but by no means all) teach in the academy. The reasons are economic. The days of cheap rents and cold-water flats are over, and freelance writing doesn’t pay. Or rather, it only pays if what you have to say is what *Connoisseur* or *Vogue* or *Town and Country* want to hear. Trade publishing has also changed. In this age of corporate takeovers, trade houses bring out ever fewer serious books. Big names get fat advances. The rest get peanuts, or recommendations to scholarly presses. And if one has in mind a book that requires months, if not years of research, only the steady income and long vacations of a job in academe will make the project viable.

Jacoby devotes a chapter to the effects of urban gentrification, and he notes that as early as the 1950s intellectuals like Irving Howe and Daniel Bell had exchanged the precariousness of life as freelancers for the security of jobs in the academy. And in his concluding chapter, he has a lot to say about the dwindling number of newspapers and the implications of this for journalists. He has almost nothing to say, however, about the way publishing today marginalizes serious writing, relegating it to a ghetto of academic and small presses that effectively severs it from the general public. Here, as in so many other instances, Jacoby blames the victim rather than the perpetrator of ‘invisibility.’

It is certainly true, as Jacoby reiterates ad infinitum, that today’s academy (like journalism, politics, and business) is afflicted by a veritable plague of bad writing. In one of the book’s middle chapters, he makes the rounds of the various disciplines, selecting examples of graceless verbiage that passes for prose. Jacoby’s travelogue makes breezy reading. But the method quickly palls, as the pooh-poohing never leads to analysis. Most of his examples are drawn from writings of a theoretical bent. But Jacoby has no sympathy for the new critical methodologies that arrived in the United States from abroad in the early 1970s, nor does he strive to understand their attraction—the challenge they posed to the elitism and political assumptions at the heart of the professoriat’s claim to moral authority. In fact, he sees no further than the jargon and dense formulas of theoretical exposition. ‘Marxist voodoo’, as he calls the language of one text, was the price of the New Left’s home in the academy. (Oddly, the only academic journal for which Jacoby has a good word is *Telos*, the epitome of the obscurantist style he elsewhere denounces. The far more accessible *Radical History Review*, on the other hand, is never discussed.)

To single out the New Left for abstruseness is grossly unfair. For once theory took hold, it largely lost its politics: it became a style emulated by the politically indifferent as well as by the politically engaged. And maddening though it sometimes is to read, critical theory opened new vistas. In literature, it illuminated familiar texts; in the arts, it opened up media traditionally regarded as off limits to serious criticism. Investigating the exchange between reader and representation or the nature of sexual difference, it probed the very structure of subjectivity. Literature, film, and the visual arts—to say nothing of feminism—have profited richly. But since Jacoby defines intellectual life so as to exclude both culture and women, the gains are never set against the losses.

Nor is he particularly interested in ideas. Rather, what excites him is the geography of intellect. Again and again he paints a nostalgic picture of yesterday's Bohemias: Greenwich Village in New York, Venice in Los Angeles, North Beach in San Francisco. Here, colonies of intellectuals gathered in coffee houses; poets held forth in bars; painters talked shop in hallways. Against this exotic background, thought flourished, and the real America, absent from today's scholarly treatises, came to life. But as Jerrold Siegel points out in *Bohemian Paris*,⁴ Bohemia is not necessarily conducive to the production of literature and art of a high order. Jacoby's glowing vision of the vanished Bohemias of the 1930s, like his romanticization of the New York intellectuals, masks another agenda. Enamoured of an older urban reality, he wants to turn back the clock—to a time before yuppies, but even more to a time before the vast social changes of the 1960s darkened city populations. As a historian, Jacoby should know that nothing but wishful thinking can bring the Jewish working class back to Flatbush, or that one cannot write about American intellectual life—even in his utopia of the 1930s and 1940s—without including blacks. For someone preoccupied with absences, his omission of Ralph Ellison, W. E. B. DuBois, and James Baldwin from the list of yesterday's intellectuals is nothing short of scandalous.

As a historian, Jacoby should also know that the rift between America's intelligentsia and the populace at large is an old story (as Richard Hofstadter pointed out twenty-five years ago in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*). The New Left didn't create this gap; if anything, it hoped to bridge it. That it couldn't is one of its tragedies. Jacoby, however, prefers to fault the Left for sins it never committed. If the New Left finds itself today on the sidelines of the grand stage of intellect, the fault lies in part with the very intellectuals he asks us to emulate. History repeats itself as farce, Marx said. In Hilton Kramer's *New Criterion*, a neo-conservative review of culture where a brash young generation carries on the red-baiting, fag-bashing tradition of McCarthyism while blaming the 1960s for every real and imagined ill of American life, the New York intellectuals have found their true heirs.

⁴ Jerrold Siegel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930*, New York 1986

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new left review

CONSTRUCTIONS OF TERROR

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The victory of the French Socialists in the recent presidential and parliamentary elections has significantly, and unexpectedly, modified the political balance in Western Europe. As the alliance of Gaullists and Centrists has foundered on its own divisions, accelerated by the offensive of the racist National Front, the attempt to build a new order in the image of the radical Right has come to appear increasingly confined to its Thatcherite pioneers in Britain. At the same time, however, in a capitalist Europe that continues to face structural dislocation and long-term unemployment, the dominant faction within the French Socialist Party has outdone its British and German counterparts in renouncing even the rhetoric of fundamental change. The new government, provoking dissension within the PS itself, has begun its term with a further series of concessions over a wealth tax that was anyway notable mainly for its timidity. For the new prime minister, Michel Rocard, coalition with fragments of the traditional Centre-Right is no longer simply a political necessity but a point of principle, an avowal that the Left can have no future except as part of a modern Centre for the management of the affairs of French capital.

In this issue George Ross and Jane Jenson closely follow the history of the French Left from the reorganization of the sixties, through the Communist-Socialist rapprochement that aroused widespread expectations in the seventies, to the demoralizing experience of government in 1981-86 and the sequel of defeat and electoral comeback. Throughout this period, the marginalization of a Communist Party which once dominated the political and intellectual horizons of the Left has been the major element in the de-radicalization of French politics, with effects acutely felt by socialists elsewhere in Europe. This was a consummation probably pursued by François Mitterrand from the outset. But Ross and Jenson show that the theoretical ossification of the PCF leadership, together with its failure to chart a coherent political course, left the Party adrift at the critical junctures of the late seventies, eventually finding no other resource than to withdraw into itself and suspend any meaningful contest with the Socialists over the direction of the Left. For the moment the PCF has managed to halt its electoral decline and inch back above ten per cent. But any future advance of the Left as a whole, including newer forces to the left of the PCF, will have to base

itself on a long-overdue examination of the record of the last three decades. The historic traditions of French popular insurgency seem a long way off today.

In the demonology of the West the figure of 'the terrorist' has a cherished place, helping to reconcile citizens to the abrogation of civil liberties and to conceal the unacknowledged state terrorism of the Western powers—the bombing of Libya by the United States, the British 'shoot to kill' policy against IRA suspects, the blowing up of *Rainbow Warrior* by French commandos. Edward Said argues in an eloquent and thoughtful article that the term 'terrorist' is itself in current usage an arbitrary ideological construct, abusively amalgamating resistance to oppression with acts of indiscriminate violence. For even the most deluded and murderous terrorist groups do not possess a fraction of the destructive resources deployed by organized states, or leased out by them to such para-statal forces as Renamo or the Contras. The mainstream of the Marxist Left has traditionally and rightly held that the crimes of the established order do not justify crimes of retaliation, particularly as these are likely merely to perpetuate the reign of established injustice. Emancipation must be the work of the oppressed themselves and its target must be the structures of oppression; only collective action can embody the former and destroy the latter. But besides such moral and political principles there remains the question of the origin and meaning of the 'terrorist phenomenon', both as reality and as representation in the modern world. Said argues that the alien image of the 'terrorist' is itself a by-product of the cultivation of privileged and overweening identities by the rulers of the Western states. Said's acute reflections suggest the links which bind Western culture and its society of the spectacle to those terrorists which it loves to hate.

Michael Mann's 'The Sources of Social Power', reviewed in this issue by Chris Wickham, challenges Marxist historical materialism on its own ground by seeking to establish the ecological, logistical and ideological dimensions of power as they can be observed in human societies from the dawn of history to the early modern epoch. Paying tribute to the extraordinary sweep and originality of this work Wickham enters a number of methodological and substantive queries, challenging in particular the role attributed to Christianity in the emergence of the Western world.

The case for the overthrow of capitalist social relations is weakened if

it solely rests on a demonstration of capitalism's contradictory and destructive nature and neglects to advance the reasons for believing that substantial equality of condition is a desirable and realizable objective which does not require the sacrifice of liberty or individual fulfilment. In this issue Alan Carling discusses four books which, in his view, successfully address themselves to the practical and ethical reasoning which should sustain a commitment to a socialism embodying egalitarian and libertarian principles.

Finally we publish two interviews which illustrate the critical transformations and re-assessments currently taking place in the Communist world. Branka Magas interviews a leading member of the Communist youth in Slovenia while Tariq Ali interviews Yuri Afanasyev, the Director of the Soviet Institute of Historical Research.

We would like to apologize to inland subscribers and all overseas readers for the late distribution of the last issue of the Review. This was due to the national postal dispute, whose beginning coincided with the publication of No. 170.

Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize

The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize has been awarded for the year 1988 to Boris Kagarlitsky for his book *The Thinking Reed*, published by Verso. Boris Kagarlitsky, born in 1958, resides in Moscow and is a leading member of the Federation of Socialist Clubs.

The Prize, established in 1969 to the value of £100, is awarded each year for work which encourages writings in the Marxist tradition to which Isaac Deutscher was dedicated. The Jury in 1988 was composed of Perry Anderson, Tamara Deutscher, Fred Halliday, Laurence Harris, Monty Johnstone, Ralph Miliband, John Saville and Gerhard Wilke.

Material for consideration in 1989 should be submitted to: The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize, c/o Gerhard Wilke, 75 St. Gabriel Road, N.W.2.

On behalf of the Jury

John Saville,
Emeritus professor of
economic and social
history,
University of Hull

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George Ross
Jane Jensen

The Tragedy of the French Left

In 1981 the French Left came to power for the first time in decades. Here was a Left which had never made peace with the consumer capitalism of the postwar period. The Communists, lesser partners in the new governing coalition, remained committed to the socialist transformation of France. The Socialists, themselves a mixed bag of political factions, scorned the meliorism of European social democracy and advocated a rupture with capitalism. More radical than any other comparable movement, with a programme proposing extensive reformist changes and endowed by the electorate and the Constitution of the Fifth Republic with institutional strength, the French experiment bore watching. Might not these parties, pursuing a tradition of Gallic idiosyncrasy, manage to 'exit the crisis from the Left'? The French Left's experiment with radical reformism was abruptly abandoned in 1983-84 after but a brief trial, with results which were in many ways worse than the familiar social democratic retreat from rhetorical promises. By 1986, when the parliamentary majority elected in 1981 was defeated, one Left had exited

the stage and another one, very different, had entered. The first Left's most dedicated and militant elements were marginalized. The Socialists had abandoned their earlier radical posture and adopted a technocratic, non-class approach to the management—albeit 'with a human face'—of French capitalism.

What the French Left lived in the 1980s was the final act of a tragedy. As in all tragedies, its conclusion was not inevitable. The logic of post-war capitalist accumulation did not dictate it, as contemporary liberal reductionism claims. Nor was it foreordained because of social democratic treachery or Stalinist perfidy, to rehearse the Left's own favourite reductionisms. The steps to the tragic outcome of the 1980s must instead be seen as a series of mistaken organizational choices which deepened contradictions. Like all tragic characters, the leading organizational actors, the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF) and the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), had fatal flaws predisposing them towards dangerous options. The important thing, however, is that there were alternatives which, had they been chosen, might have changed the logic of events.

We will begin our essay with the unorthodox dramaturgical device of presenting the later acts of the tragedy first, reviewing the dismal record of the Left experiment in its first sojourn in government between 1981 and 1986. Here we witness not only a catalogue of policy failures but also, more importantly, an accumulation of large barriers to any future successes. These barriers prefigure the analyses and initiatives which President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Michel Rocard are now undertaking with the second Socialist government, elected in 1988. In Part II, we discuss the beginnings of the French Left's modern drama in the 1950s and 1960s. At this early point, the French Communist Party is the hero making the mistaken choices which set the rest of the play in motion. Part III shows how these earlier choices set up a complex duel between the PCF and the Socialists in which the Communists, trapped in a situation beyond their capacities to shape in the aftermath of May–June 1968 lost their ability to control the PS's most problematic tendencies. Part IV discusses the penultimate actions of major characters in the later 1970s which set the stage for the denouement of the play. Our conclusions assess the new politics of the French Socialists and the much-weakened Communist Party with the 1990s on the horizon.

I. The Great Experiment of 1981–86: Tragedy in Triumph

Despite the radical rhetoric and bold promises surrounding the first electoral victory of François Mitterrand, 1981 was never meant to be 1917. The French Left experiment of 1981–86 was undertaken *à contre courant*, at a moment of international capitalist crisis, and would deserve to be judged successful had it moved seriously towards greater democratic control over the economy, democratization of French life and a more progressive posture in international matters. In what follows we will show how far it failed to achieve even these modest goals. In fact, what turned out to be the French Left's major 'achievement' in these

critical years was its own transvaluation in less radical directions, as the important elections of 1988 made clear.

Democratizing the Economy

The programme to democratize the economy contained a series of familiar propositions. There would be extensive nationalizations in the core, market-oriented monopoly sector which, combined with major changes in industrial relations, would allow enhanced popular control over the economy. Greater popular involvement, together with new elites in nationalized corporations and politics, would foster a national mobilization of research, policy intelligence and energy. This, in turn, would give France a significantly more dynamic and balanced international economy and allow reconquest of the domestic market. New, and better distributed, economic growth would then permit an expansion and democratization of social programmes.

The vision was classically social democratic, derived from the *belle époque* of such visions, the 1940s.¹ It had its peculiarly Gallic, and somewhat contradictory, twists, however. For example, there was a large quantum of statist and Jacobin optimism that change could be legislated and decreed from the centre under the indispensable leadership of more moral, more intelligent people at the helm. In addition, it was assumed that the 1981 election and legislative reforms to promote greater participation and industrial democracy would release a flood of popular enthusiasm to push the project forward.

A burst of reformist activity rarely seen anywhere in advanced capitalism since 1947 began immediately following the 1981 election. There were nationalizations on an unprecedented scale, plus reforms to strengthen union and worker rights on the shopfloor. The government began a bold redistributive scheme of demand stimulation. Social programmes were reinforced and certain new measures such as early retirement and work-sharing were introduced. The promotion of research and development, culture, gender equity, and education received new attention and bigger budgets.

After less than a year, however, these reformist efforts had foundered in an unfavourable international situation. Preexisting industrial weaknesses, President Mitterrand's unwillingness to devalue the franc preemptively and the effects of American deflation combined to turn redistributive demand stimulation policies into ballooning inflation, a flood of imports, and international trade difficulties.² In response, the Left initially imposed stringent austerity—*rigueur*, in its words—after

¹ Mitterrand's programmatic pledges are contained in *Le Mouvement Desiré et Documenté, L'Élection présidentielle du 27 avril-10 mai 1981*. They draw heavily on the earlier *Programme Socialiste* (1980) which, for reasons having to do with the internal balance of forces in the PS, was written by CGRUS, the Party's most left-wing faction. On its roots in the Resistance-Liberation, see Jean-Pierre Rioux, *Le Quatrième républicain, I. L'Ardent et la nécessité*, Paris 1980.

² The best source on the economic context of this period and of the Left in power is Alain Lipietz, *L'Année du Pousserment*, Paris 1984. See also the more econometrically informed Alain Fonteneau and Pierre-Alain Muet, *Le Growth face à la crise*, Paris 1985 and Peter A. Hall, *Governing The Economy*, London 1987.

June 1982. The franc was devalued, reforms were halted, taxes were increased, growth ambitions were scaled back to near zero, and sets of measures (including temporary wage and price policies) were implemented to deindex wages from inflation. At first, the government was at pains to keep its commitment to redistribute income towards the poor. In consequence, both blue- and white-collar middle-income earners bore the brunt.³

These austerity measures were not enough to stabilize the international trade position and to reduce a comparatively high level of inflation. With the IMF in the entryway if not yet at the door, the government completed its 180-degree policy turn in spring 1983. Some inside the Left coalition—the Communists, CERES (the PS's most left-wing fraction), important ministers and advisers to the President—advocated a limited uncoupling of France from the international economy to allow a voluntaristic industrial strategy and buoyancy in the domestic market. But these forces lost out to the account-balancers, centrist economic managers and modernizers. What resulted was a political sea-change. Abandoning a vision demanding significant shifts in France's domestic social compromise in favour of labour and the poor, the Socialists—for the Communists refused to follow—turned towards a technocratic quest for international market share in which domestic social issues would be secondary.⁴

From late 1983 until the Left lost its parliamentary majority in March 1986, then reaching a new crescendo around the 1988 elections, policy and political rhetoric focused on modernization. Talk of entrepreneurial ingenuity and profit-making displaced a discourse of social equity and justice. France's mixed economy would streamline, rationalize and high-technologize itself to slug it out with the Americans, West Germans, Japanese and assorted lesser players. Budget deficits would be cut to the bone. Nationalized firms would shed tens of thousands of jobs. The deindexation of wages would cut living standards as well as inflation. As a result hundreds of thousands were left unemployed, while huge numbers of young people were unable to break into the labour force at all. With modernization the Socialists promised, and did, things which the Right before them had never dared to do.

This was more than a simple story of failure. The whole process also brought philosophical and programmatic reappraisals, particularly for the Socialists. Nationalized firms, originally presented as agencies for enhanced worker participation, social justice and collective control, were redesignated as multinationals-in-becoming. Thus were the ideas of nationalization and the credibility of public ownership undermined, quite deliberately, by much of the Left.⁵ Similar things happened to commitments to planning, as many Socialists began vigorously to defend

³ For facts and analyses of these trends see CERC, *Constat de l'abolition relative des revenus en France*, Paris 1984.

⁴ The best account of the conflicts inside the government at this critical juncture is Philippe Bauchard, *La Guerre des deux rois*, Paris 1986.

⁵ Extensive privatization after 1986 was thus greeted as a step away from dogmatic experimentation even by many in the Socialist Party itself.

and reaccredit the decision-making and allocative rationality of the market.

Nor was the economy democratized by the introduction of greater worker and union control. The Auroux Laws, if not radical steps towards *antogestism*, began much-needed humanizing changes and instituted some additional worker participation in French industrial life.⁶ The context within which these reforms were introduced, however, undercut their potential. Organized labour in France—its most militant segments in particular—was declining in membership, influence and mobilizing power in the 1980s. The unions were therefore not in a good position to convert legislated reforms into new strengths on the shopfloor. The coincidence of union weakness and changing employer strategies quickly turned strident capitalist opposition to the reforms into benign tolerance, a good indicator of the real thrust of change. Aspects of the reforms which promoted new rights of expression and communication at firm level, for example, played into the hands of employers seeking to engage workers directly in Japanese-style dialogue to circumvent unions and promote 'flexibility'.

Democratizing French Life?

The great explosion of joy at the Bastille after François Mitterrand's election in 1981 was partly an expression of hope that the authoritarianism and *bautisme* of French government would give way to greater accessibility and democracy. And in some key areas the Left was more liberal than the Right before it. Legal reform, for example—symbolized by abolition of the death penalty and changed relationships between police, courts and the public—was long overdue. Some progress was also achieved in the protection of women's rights and the regulation of reproduction. Efforts to give regional governments greater autonomy from the centre were less spectacular, however, than the billing which the Left gave them, since they reflected more a preexisting Left-Right consensus on the need to deconcentrate administrative power than any movement towards *antogestism*.⁷

The task of democratizing society also dictated major changes in the educational system. The Left had few new ideas to propose here. Instead it wasted vast amounts of energy fighting the century-old battle over

⁶ For the original proposals and justifications for the Auroux Laws see Jean Auroux, *Les Droits des travailleurs*, Paris 1981 and *Le Monde: Discours et Documents: Les Nouveaux droits des travailleurs* (June 1983). See also Duncan Gallic, 'Les Lois Auroux: The Reform of French Industrial Relations' in Howard Machin and Vincent Wright, eds, *Economic Policy and Policy-Making under the Mitterrand Presidency, 1981-84*, New York 1985.

⁷ For details on decentralization see the articles by Yves Mény and Catherine Grémion in George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia Malachuk, eds, *The Mitterrand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Socialist France*, London 1987.

laïcité, ultimately failing ignominiously.⁸ This pattern of lost opportunity was repeated, to even more disastrous effect, in the area of media reform where Socialist modernization of television opened the gates to a tide of crass money-grubbing and political manipulation which may impede cultural democratization for generations.⁹

There were, then, few real achievements from the 1981–86 experiment beyond some needed liberalization. In particular, despite its earlier talk of *antogestio*, the Left proceeded in resolutely Jacobin ways. There was *no* mobilization of the people of the Left during these years, none of the passion of Popular Front and Liberation which had pushed governments beyond what they would otherwise have accomplished. The major popular mobilizations after 1981 were *against* the Left, in particular around the education issue. Why? No doubt the persistent statism and, yes, parliamentary cretinism of the Left—Socialists and Communists both—in the decades before 1981 were the most important causes. In a modern Jacobin vision the people's role is mainly to vote and, on occasion, to strike or take to the streets in carefully controlled ways. In addition, the demobilizing effects of economic crisis—which touched the labour movement most of all—played their role.

The Left's record on the most important democratic issue it had to face—the rise of anti-immigrant racism and a genuinely menacing extreme-Right *Front National*—is highly pertinent. Here there was a nip-and-tuck race between self-righteousness without leadership ('we are against this and our record is clear . . . but let us not do much now and hope that it will go away') and the worst kind of political opportunism. The most important gesture was of the latter kind. The 1985 electoral reform establishing partial proportional representation was presented as a traditional French Left programme to extend democ-

⁸ With large, the issue of *laïcité* has to do with the place and role of Catholic schooling—whether it should exist, how it should be controlled, whether it should receive state aid, etc. By the 1980s, however, 'private schools' had become major safety valves for middle-class parents seeking to shield their children's prospects for social mobility from the effects of demonizing public schools. The Socialists thus would have been ill-advised politically to act on the question. Once they finally did resolve to act, in 1984, general programmatic and political failure left the government somewhat resourceless. Thus, plus the fact that the legislation which the government ultimately proposed (essentially directed towards greater control over private school curricula and personnel) was pitched upwards in a misaimed *laïc* direction by a fraction of the PS itself, forced a confrontation in which a politically weak government was simply overwhelmed by a huge coalition, including the political Right, which was able to blame the Left for attacking human rights and liberties. The largest mass demonstration of the Left period occurred in consequence, when over a million opponents of the government's school bill massed at Versailles. Mitterrand withdrew the bill not long afterwards. On the state of the schools, see Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Tant qu'il y aura des profs*, Paris 1984. For a brief, but very shrewd, overview of the whole situation, see Antoine Prost, 'The Education Macabre', in Eosa et al., *The Mitterrand Experiment*.

⁹ After 1981 all the Left could think to do initially about TV was to establish a weak 'High Authority' to oversee the public broadcast system, mild progress over what had gone before. The Right had earlier carefully infested TV to control it. After 1981 the Left tried to do this more gently and democratically. All of this was beside the general point of innovative new policies, however. The need to expend French TV offerings and the impending Europeanization of broadcasting because of satellites led last, in 1985, to cynical manipulation. Conscious that the Left would lose in 1986, Mitterrand quickly granted new private enterprise franchises to friends upon whom he thought he could rely. The notorious Italian cultural capitalist Silvio Berlusconi—of Fellini's *Ginger and Fred* fame—was brought in replete with game shows and borrowed American series. It was no surprise, therefore, that when the Right returned in 1986, it proceeded with equal cynicism.

racy. In the specific circumstances, however, it was really intended to place the Centre-Right in a difficult coalitional and ideological position and thus to minimize Socialist losses in the 1986 legislative elections. It succeeded quite well at this, but it also granted the *Front National* new forums, legitimacy and parliamentary representation. Faced with a situation in which anti-racist courage was the only progressive course, the Socialists instead chose to allow the *Front National* to survive and thrive.¹⁰ The fact that the cudgel of anti-racism was taken up by an autonomous youth movement, *SOS-Racisme*, with the Socialists staying carefully in the background, also said a great deal. The ps clearly regarded the rise of crypto-fascist racism as but a minor tactical problem.

Promoting Democracy in the World

All Fifth Republic Presidents with workable parliamentary majorities have had considerable foreign policy power. And, as de Gaulle demonstrated, it was a power that existed to be used.¹¹ But whereas the nationalism which nourished Gaullism had roots in the experiences of Resistance and Liberation, the foreign policy propensities of François Mitterrand were born in the Cold War Fourth Republic, when virulent Atlanticism was one price of a ministerial career.¹² The dramatic 1970s renaissance of anti-Sovietism in the French intelligentsia, a home-grown product which flowered during a moment of international détente, found its way into the Socialist Party.¹³ Mitterrand's earlier leanings were thereby reinforced.

After 1981 France got exactly what it elected in East-West relationships and, it must be said, what its intelligentsia seemed to want. With the exception of the early and small matter of the Siberian gas pipeline, Mitterrand proved to be one of President Reagan's most precious

¹⁰ In 1986 the new Centre-Right majority changed the electoral law back to its pre-1985 form, albeit with some self-serving changes in constituency boundaries, and this had its predictable effect on the *Front National* in the June 1988 legislative elections. The FN won but one seat in the National Assembly, down from 32 in 1986 (with Jean-Marie Le Pen himself losing his seat). The fact that Le Pen had previously won close to 15 per cent in the April presidential elections meant that the FN continued to live, however.

¹¹ We are not suggesting that de Gaulle, a profoundly conservative man, was interested in using these powers for progressive purposes. He simply refused to sacrifice his version of French national interests to American hegemony. On de Gaulle see Jean Lacouture's biography, *De Gaulle*, Volume 3, *La Souveraineté*, Paris 1983, especially Part II.

¹² Mitterrand was a central ministerial figure in virtually all of the Left-Centre coalition governments of the Fourth Republic, demonstrating extraordinary political and doctrinal flexibility, excepting on matters of East-West relations.

¹³ In the mid-1970s apostate *secoursé-léonards*, ex-Maoists like André Glucksmann, Maurice Clavel, Serge July and Bernard-Henri Lévy, strongly encouraged by Centre-Right political and publishing circles frightened by the prospect of the Left's growth in France and Southern Europe, began an ideological offensive to destroy the PCF and the French Left's more general belief in socialist utopias and to persuade this Left that a form of modest Tocquevillean liberalism was the appropriate way to be progressive. Anti-Sovietism was at the core of this. The campaign began around the Solzhenitsyn affair in the USSR (which eventuated in the author's transportation to the USA) and then proceeded to review the already well-reviewed story of *gulag*, which 'new philosophers', as they were called, presented as a revelation. Centrist and neo-Mendotist elements in the Socialist orbit, which had never agreed to the Socialist-Communist alliance and its programme, were eager participants in this peculiarly French and remarkably successful campaign.

supporters. One need only remember Mitterrand's essential role in 1981-83 in prodding the West Germans to accept the deployment of Euromissiles, even at the cost of alienating the German Social Democrats. There was something of a complementary European focus in this, to be sure, since it paved the way for subsequent Franco-German military and strategic collaboration, thus helping France to maintain a central position in European defence and other coordination. Still, general subordination to the USA meant that France could not take a lead in responding to the beginnings of the Gorbachev era, for example. Moreover, the Reagan administration simply disregarded Mitterrand's feeble attempts to limit American manipulation of the resources of the entire capitalist world to keep the ailing US economy afloat.

Such behaviour in East-West matters surprised few who knew Mitterrand. The Left's actions in North-South matters were more perplexing, however. The Socialist Party was filled with activists whose central concerns had once been to avoid the imposition of superpower problematics on North-South relationships and to recast French dealings with the Third World, former French colonies in the first instance. And, for a time after 1981, Socialist figures like Régis Debray and Jean-Pierre Cot continued to claim that American insistence on subordinating all issues of the Third World to anti-Sovietism was counter-productive and often unjust; enlightened societies such as France could take the lead in developing new strategies. Supporting such claims, France pledged to help Nicaragua, to struggle against American cultural imperialism, to avoid selling arms, and to transform relations of cooperation with francophone Africa away from clientelism.

All this was quickly exposed as mere talk, however. US interests in Central America came to predominate. The importance of arms sales for the balance of payments meant that France aggressively remained in the major league of arms merchants. Significant changes in patterns of cooperation with francophone Africa were quickly shelved, along with proposals for alignment with progressive Third World nations. By 1986 French secret agents had sunk the *Rainbow Warrior*, while French troops, planes and materiel were propping up corrupt Chadian elites.

Political and Ideological Failure

This digest of policy failures is not, however, the worst part of the balance-sheet of the 1981-86 experiment. For not only did the French Left fall miserably short of even its most modest programmatic aspirations, but in the process it presided over a dramatic collapse in the social, political and ideological worlds which for decades had sustained its identity and supported underlying processes of progressive class formation in France. For a half-century prior to the 1980s, for better or worse, the *Parti Communiste Français* had supplied the Left with much of its thought, mobilizing energy and radicalism. The PCF won nearly 30 per cent of the vote at the Liberation, 26 per cent in 1956 and 21 per cent as late as 1979. And although the Party's membership after 1947 fluctuated between 300,000 and 700,000, it remained by far the most powerful corpus of political activists, composed of extraordinarily

devoted and selfless *militants*. Through solid work in the 1930s and 1940s it had come to control the strategic directions of France's largest union organization, the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT). In theoretical and intellectual matters its positions always commanded respect and demanded interest, even among its opponents.

The period of Left government to 1986, during part of which (1981–84) the PCF had ministers for only the second time in its history, made visible the collapse of this formidable complex of organizational and ideological power. Georges Marchais, Communist presidential candidate in 1981, received only 15.3 per cent of the vote. By the March 1986 Legislative elections, which returned the Right to government, the PCF was at 9.8 per cent (less than the racist *Front National*). All told, the Communists lost well over half of their national electoral support in a few short years, along with a substantial part of their local governmental power (traditionally very important in maintaining the party organization). The Party's membership declined to approximately half of its late 1970s levels and its internal life became consumed by bitter conflict.¹⁴ Most importantly the Communists lost virtually all of their ideological power. One major aspect of this was that Marxism in France, whose fortunes had always been formed by the PCF's efforts, virtually disappeared too.

The existence of such a strong PCF had always presented the non-Communist Left with a complicated dilemma. It could refuse to collaborate with the Communists, turning rightwards for allies, but only at the cost of any reformist pretensions. Or it could deal with the Communists and thus be obliged to take their programmatic, theoretical and ideological positions seriously. Historically, the non-Communist Left alternated between the two options. But the recurrence of the second, plus the persistence of PCF strength during periods when the first was chosen, had given the French Left a commitment to class perspectives, a *marxisant* view of the world, and at least rhetorical commitment to socialist transformation.

The decline of PCF power in the 1980s and the connected increase in Socialist electoral strength altered this balance of influence. For the first time in fifty years, the Socialists found themselves relatively free of Communist pressure. This, combined with the policy difficulties in government, allowed a retreat from progressive programmes and analyses which the *Parti Socialiste* beat with a vengeance. In these processes the political discourse of the French Left changed dramatically, and perhaps permanently, as the 1988 reelection campaign of François Mitterrand strikingly showed. Marxism, class-analytical perspectives, notions of socialist transition and even stress on equality and anti-capitalism were all deposited in the famous dustbin of history. French

¹⁴ Here we are referring to conflict between those who came to be called 'renovators', around Pierre Juquin, who advocated democratizing the party and returning to a strategy of alliance with the Socialists, and the party leadership, which advocated a strategy of militant autonomy and used old-fashioned organizational methods to wipe out dissent. For the 'renovator' point of view, see Michel Cardoze, *Nouveau voyage à l'intérieur du Parti communiste français*, Paris 1987. For a good demonstration of the creativity remaining in the PCF, see Philippe Herzig, *La France peut se renouveler*, Paris 1987.

Socialism, reaching for a maximum of new electoral support and towards new centrist alliances, began to preach modernization, flexibility, and the competitiveness of a mixed economy with a human face, world market permitting. The old Left discourse—in which the gap between ambitious political goals and the constraints of the real world appeared as a problem that could be resolved through voluntarist determination—was overwhelmed by the logic of the new International of economists, financiers and multinational executives. Real world constraints were elevated to rigid boundaries of the possible.

The Left in government also presided over radical changes in the French labour movement. In the 1960s and early 1970s union life had effectively divided between a Left-leaning CGT and the *Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail* (CFDT), the first dominated by the PCF and the second, ex-Catholic and syndicalist-*autogestionnaire*. By the later 1970s, partisan conflicts had refracted through the union movement, dividing the CGT-CFDT union front. The impact of economic crisis on core sectors of French industry combined with such divisions to enhance union decline. The exception to this decline was France's third major union, *Force Ouvrière*. Being anti-Communist, publicly non-partisan and, in fact, eager to deal with the Right and capital on amicable terms, FO began to gain strength.

After 1981, despite the establishment of an allegedly friendly government, such tendencies intensified. Perhaps because of persistent divisions, but more likely because of identification with a government which seemed incapable of responding to working-class needs, the CGT and CFDT continued to decline relative to FO, while the CFDT began to pull away from any Left identification to mimic the moderation of FO.¹⁵ These manoeuvres changed the balance of influence. Whereas in the 1960s the CGT had been as strong as all of the others combined and the united influence of the CGT and CFDT had been overwhelming, by the mid-1980s the CGT, still marginally the largest French union, existed in a more or less equal conflictual relationship with the other two.¹⁶ All this, in the short run, made it very difficult for workers to resist the effects of deindustrialization, technological change and capital's definition of flexibility.¹⁷ The more important longer-run trends reinforced the effects of political changes. The militancy, radicalism and class consciousness of French labour had been, in large part, the product of organizations—the CGT primarily, but also the CFDT for a period in

¹⁵ On the interaction of trade unions and Left parties in power, see George Ross, 'From One Left to Another: *La Sncf* in Mitterrand's France', in Ross et al., *The Mitterrand Experiment*.

¹⁶ A few numbers underline what has happened. As late as the mid-1960s the CGT won upwards of 50 per cent of seats on Works' Committees, a good indicator of union strength. By 1985 it was winning, but at .6 per cent. Another index might be the affiliations of elected shop-floor delegates. Whereas CGT strength had, in the 1960s, been roughly analogous to its Works Committee strength, in 1985 the CGT won 30.7 per cent, the CFDT 24.8 per cent, FO 17.9 per cent and the CCG, a conservative white-collar union, 13.6 per cent. In membership terms the CGT had 2.4 million members in 1975, and 1.6 million in 1985. The CFDT had 1.1 million in 1975, and 885,000 in 1985, while FO went from 900,000 in 1975 to 1.2 million in 1985. These figures come from two 1987 CEVIPOF working documents: René Mouriaux and Françoise Subleau, *Approche quantitative du syndicalisme français, 1945-1985*, and *Les Effectifs syndicaux en France, 1895-1985*.

¹⁷ That 1985, when the Socialists turned decisively towards what they called industrial modernization, had the lowest level of strike activity since the 1950s is eloquent testimony.

the 1960s and early 1970s. Change in the balance of influence between unions had undermined past patterns at a moment of ferocious offensive against labour everywhere.

Changes in France's intellectual climate also contributed. In *In The Tracks of Historical Materialism* Perry Anderson opined that 'in the three decades or so after the Liberation, France came to enjoy a cosmopolitan paramountcy in the general Marxist universe. . . . The fall in this dominance in the later seventies was no mere national matter . . . Paris today is the capital of European reaction.'¹⁸ As Anderson indicates, the defection of France's intelligentsia from any Left project predated 1981. Marxism had already collapsed as a viable intellectual paradigm and much of the French Left intelligentsia had begun an orgy of anti-Sovietism and anti-socialism, as epitomized by the bombastic mediocrity of 'new philosophy'. Particularly striking was the evolution of many *antogestionnaires* who, after advocating decentralized revolutionary action in the early 1970s, had decided, a decade later, that the solution to France's problems lay in the revitalization of civil society. Proudhon and Rosa Luxemburg gave way to Tocqueville and Adam Smith.¹⁹

These major changes in the political outlook of intellectuals weighed heavily for the Left in government after 1981. In effect, the silence of the intellectuals deprived the Left of important support during its brief reformist phase and, when the Socialists abandoned their reformism to turn towards modernization, many intellectuals were more than eager to jump on the new bandwagon of centrist ideological normalization. Perhaps more important, it has always been impossible to imagine Left progress without a solid alliance between significant sectors of the intelligentsia and the forces of the Left. The ideological and political trajectories of the French intelligentsia were in precisely the opposite direction.

II. Opportunities Lost: 1956-1968

France Modernizes

In the late 1940s France still had many of the features of an agrarian, protected, empire-oriented, and 19th-century society, with a greater proportion of the active French labour force (nearly 30 per cent) in farming and forestry than in industry. Twenty years later this figure had sunk to 15 per cent and by 1975 it was below 10 per cent.²⁰ In these years France expanded industrially, there were major shifts from traditional to modern sectors, productivity vastly increased, and service

¹⁸ Perry Anderson, *In The Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Verso, London 1983, p. 32.

¹⁹ Some of the ironies are truly cruel. From virulent rejections of Anglo-Saxon developments in the 1950s and 1960s the French intelligentsia turned in the 1970s and 1980s to reproducing virtually the same intellectual trends for which they had earlier damned the Americans and British. One would be only mildly uncharitable in labelling the 'new philosophy' as plagiarized Popperism and the rediscovery of Tocqueville as borrowed American Cold War pluralism. Whether this is another case of first time tragedy, second time farce we leave readers to decide.

²⁰ André Gauron, *Histoire économique et sociale de la cinquième république* Volume 1, Paris 1983, Table 1, p. 22, Jean Fourastié, *Les Trentes glorieuses*, Paris 1979, Table 17, p. 88.

sector employment exploded.²¹ Economic growth was sudden and rapid. With the index set at 100 for 1938, GNP in 1949 was 109, 333 in 1970 and 400 by 1975.²² Value-added grew 5.5 per cent annually from 1950 to 1957, 6 per cent from 1957 to 1964 and 5.9 per cent for the decade thereafter.²³ Changes in consumer habits were striking. The French built houses, installed central heating and indoor plumbing, bought refrigerators, washing machines, television sets and automobiles at a tremendous pace.²⁴ Imports from the old empire declined from 24.7 per cent of total trade in 1949 to 6.1 per cent in 1973, with exports to the same areas declining from 38.2 to 9.1 per cent. Imports from advanced industrial societies grew from 55 per cent (26.5 per cent EEC countries-to-be) in 1949 to 74.7 per cent (54.6 per cent EEC) in 1973 with exports growing from 47.2 per cent (33.4 per cent EEC-to-be) in 1949 to 75.4 per cent (51.6 per cent EEC) in 1973.²⁵

The political character of France's voyage to economic modernity reflected long-standing traditions. Exasperated by the immobility of French capital, administrative elites who had developed modernizing and strongly statist scenarios for change even before the Liberation, after 1944 pushed towards a state-led and partly planned economic trajectory. When the Liberation political coalition imploded in 1946-47 and both Communists and Gaullists became political pariahs, the Right and fractions of traditional capital did reconstruct their positions. Nevertheless, the absence of any politically continuous majority forced Fourth Republic modernizing technocrats to pursue their strategies through state agencies, bypassing the legislature as much as possible.²⁶ Economic change thus happened more in spite of than because of the efforts of French capitalists.²⁷

The presidentialism of the Gaullist Fifth Republic created greater space for technocrats to pursue their strategies through indicative planning, industrial policies structured around state incentives and resources, manipulation of credit and the like. Technocrats were helped, as well, by the stabilization of a quasi-permanent Centre-Right parliamentary majority, which guaranteed political continuity and promoted many modernizing Gaullists connected to dynamic sectors of capital. Perhaps most important was de Gaulle himself, a genuinely charismatic leader

²¹ Ibid., Table 1, *ibid.*, p. 92.

²² Ibid., Table 4., p. 206.

²³ Gaumont, *op. cit.*, Table 12, p. 136.

²⁴ See Fourastié, *op. cit.*, Graph 4, p. 282, (household equipment, automobiles), Table 32, p. 127 (vacations), Table 33, p. 130 (housing).

²⁵ Gaumont, *op. cit.*, Table 6, p. 66.

²⁶ The ideal-typical technocrats were figures such as François Bloch-Lainé (who mobilised savings into capital), Louis Armand (who reeled the railroads), Pierre Monnet (who did the same for electricity and gas) and, of course, Jean Monnet, who invented the *Plan*, helped to invent the EEC and, above all, managed to channel French Marshall Plan aid to infrastructural development while, by and large, keeping it out of the hands of ministers. But any full list of entrepreneurial high civil servants would be very long. For such a catalogue see Richard Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*, Cambridge 1981.

²⁷ At only one point, under Pierre Mendès-France in 1954, did the 'modernizers' come out of their bureaux to present themselves to France's elected deputies and, at least on economic matters, they were beaten back: with great dispatch Jean-Pierre Rioux's second volume of *La France de la quatrième république* has a superb chapter (Chapter 2) devoted to the Mendès episode.

who added his political weight to the technocrats' modernization strategy. If it seems incongruous that this consummately 19th-century man would promote late 20th-century economic changes, one must remember the General's ambitious geopolitical plans. France needed an independent high-tech defence apparatus—nuclear weapons, sophisticated aircraft, missiles, electronics, submarines—to take its strategic distance from the USA. Economic strength, particularly in European markets, would also be necessary to build the autonomous Europe which de Gaulle hoped to construct around a Franco-German core as a solvent of the post-Yalta blocs.²⁸

Forward movement in the early Fifth Republic was, nonetheless, profoundly contradictory. The modernizing coalition of statist technocrats, forward-looking political elites and fractions of capital had to compromise with undynamic sectors of capital, the *petite bourgeoisie*, and peasants. Rapid growth provided a margin to buy off such groups, but only at some cost to modernization itself. Quite as important, change was carried out with little regard for its social consequences. The General himself wavered between belief in the soothing nature of nationalist rhetoric and advocacy of Catholic-corporatist notions of participation, which few people understood and crucial parts of his own political coalition opposed.²⁹ For their part the technocrats shared the contemporary conceit that economic growth would dissolve class conflict. Modernizing fractions of capital had a simpler outlook, adamantly refusing to grant anything to labour which was not wrested by open class warfare. Finally, much of the *bien pensant* peasantry and bourgeoisie rather desperately wanted French society to remain in the nineteenth century.

Labour was an excluded *object* of modernization in all this.³⁰ Aggregate economic growth figures considerably outstripped wage increases.³¹ Growth was often the result of expanding and modernizing capacity based on the introduction of new workers to the labour force, usually from the countryside, who became semi-skilled operatives facing ever intenser work as a result of technological innovation. The experience, which included the replacement of declining by more modern industries, was profoundly disorienting for those who had to live through it. Employers consistently withheld concessions to labour because of a sympathetic state, weak unions, and an under-institutionalized labour market. The regime was also remarkably short-sighted about the need to modernize institutions like schools and universities, the media, citizen-state relations, the courts, and the police. Official France oscillated between haughty authoritarianism and archaic paternalism.

²⁸ Lacourture, *De Gaulle*, Vol 3., Part II is especially good on de Gaulle's geopolitical pretensions

²⁹ *Ibid.*, chapters 21–25

³⁰ The foundation stone was laid in the early postwar years. Partly in consequence, reformism came to a grinding halt *before* any solid workplace compromise between capital and labour was achieved. Therefore, because capital had refused to give up its prerogatives in the workplace, such modernization as did occur was particularly hard on labour. Wages were low, hours were long, and there was little employment security. Class war of a somewhat unregulated kind persisted on the shopfloor.

³¹ Indeed, real wages went up only rather slowly until the later 1960s. See Gauron, *op. cit.*, Graph 1, p. 31

The PCF Has Its Day: 1956-1964

By the early 1960s the consolidation of a Right-leaning parliamentary majority around General de Gaulle had repolarized French party politics, narrowed the strategic options of the non-Communist Left and made new collaboration between the Communists and Socialists much more likely. At this point the PCF had a solid electoral base, the support of the majority of workers, control over the strongest union, an army of militant members, substantial local governmental power, and great ideological influence over Left politics and the intelligentsia. In contrast, its major rival, the SFIO, which had immolated itself in Cold War Fourth Republic politics, appeared primarily as the promoter of a *socialisme expéditionnaire*, invading Suez and pacifying Algeria with French conscripts.³² The Socialist vote had declined, party membership was mainly confined to local *notables* and stodgy municipal socialists, and its leadership, after a decade of talking Marxism and doing right-wing politics, had an extraordinary record of failure and no ideological credibility. The opportunities presented by this historical moment were thus the PCF's to seize or squander.

The PCF's first quandary was choice of strategy. Its repertory held but two: militant autonomy and united frontism of the type practised to such great effect in the Popular Front.³³ Militant autonomy, which had been the Party's strategic posture in the Cold War as well as in the 'class against class' period between 1928 and 1934, had historically been a defensive strategy, designed to accentuate differences between a revolutionary PCF and meliorist social democrats and to solidify commitment within the Party's own base. Militant autonomy had usually been presented as a temporary posture, necessary until the PCF had amassed enough resources to pursue an alliance strategy from a position of strength and to drive a wedge between the base of social democracy

³² We will not here rehearse the comedy of opportunism and *mauvaise foi* lived by the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO), French social democracy, in the immediate post-war years. Suffice it to say that the SFIO was instrumental, among other things, in making the Cold War in Europe possible, in breaking the forward momentum of French labour after 1947 in such a way as to allow French capital to restore a position which had become very precarious as a result of the late 1930s and Vichy, in installing France in quasi-permanent colonial warfare (from Indo-China to Algeria) and in helping the Right to rehabilitate itself. See Hugues Portelli, *Le Socialisme français tel qu'il est*, Paris 1980, especially Chapter 3; Daniel Lagou, *Histoire du socialisme en France depuis 1900*, Paris 1961; Roger Quilbot, *La SFIO et l'exercice du pouvoir*, Paris 1972. The label *socialisme expéditionnaire* comes from Michel Winock, *La République en marche*, Paris 1978.

³³ The united frontism which the PCF embraced had evolved, largely in the Popular Front and Resistance-Liberation years, far away from Lenin's original formulations of the 1920s. The latter clearly excluded alliance with left-leaning bourgeois parties. Post-1933 united frontism, on the other hand, was often eager to seek alliance with such parties. This second version of united frontism had been created, of course, by Comintern decision in the mid-1930s, although largely under the prodding of the PCF itself. It was used by the party subsequently in the Popular Front years, and then after June 1941 in the Resistance-Liberation years until October 1947, when the Cominform was constituted.

and its leadership. Often, however, it had really been a drawing of the wagons around the campfire to await better days.³⁴

The Party had traditionally picked united frontism whenever it judged full participation in electoral politics either possible or desirable. Such was the case in the later 1930s when the leadership began to perceive that its Cold War isolation might end. United frontism involved coalition manipulation with the non-Communist Left and was conceptualized in a two-stage scenario. First the PCF would seek alliances and electoral success, moderating its revolutionary leanings to commit its allies to a thorough-going programme for change. The shifting balances of forces on the Left attendant upon the implementation of this programme would then allow the PCF to reveal its revolutionary identity more fully and to undertake a transition to socialism.

In its earlier manifestations the aims of PCF united frontism had been modest. It had been a method for achieving important but limited and reformist goals, essentially through the de-radicalization of Communist behaviour and top-level deals with social democracy and French radicalism. In the 1930s and 1940s, PCF united frontism had been designed primarily to use coalitional politics for international goals, relieving the isolation of the Soviet Union and the Spanish Republic in the Popular Front, helping out the allied war effort and then warding off the Cold War in the Resistance-Liberation period. To achieve such goals the party had eagerly donned nationalistic and patriotic garb, in the process winning large amounts of new support and helping France to implement necessary domestic reforms. Mass mobilization, although never excluded, had been carefully controlled by the party (the strikes of 1936 were a happy, and somewhat accidental, exception) to give weight in bargaining with leaders of the non-Communist Left. United frontism had also been profoundly centralizing, designed to persuade people that change would flow from the work of Left politicians controlling and transforming the state.

The first step in the PCF's new united frontism for the 1960s was to seek a deal around a 'common programme' with the non-Communist Left, the Socialists in the first instance.³⁵ The Communists saw this programme continuing the plans of the domestic Resistance from the

³⁴ Usually this had meant great mobilizational activism, at the base, undoubtedly a healthy thing. But such activism had almost always also played to virulent *sectarisme*, accentuated the party's pro-Sovietism in international affairs, and vaunted the Soviet model for transition to socialism. Thus while militant autonomy intensified political feelings inside the party's safe base, it had usually done so at the expense of communication with social groups outside this base. It also depended upon a solid social core of traditional workers willing to take their distance from reformism. On the PCF in the Cold War period see Philippe Robieux, *Histoire intérieure du Parti communiste français*, Volume 2, Paris 1981, Chapters 4-6, Annie Kriegel, *Les Communistes français: Portrait d'un peuple*, Paris 1968, Irwin Wall, *French Communism in the Era of Stalin*, Westport, Conn., 1983. It is most interesting to review the two very different modern PCF interpretations of this period. The first, Thorezian, is found in PCF, *Histoire du Parti communiste français (manuel)*, Paris 1964, chapters 12-15, while the more recent is Roger Bourderon et al., *Le PCF, étapes et problèmes*, Paris 1981, chapter 7 by Roger Martelli.

³⁵ It was not as if the party could have been unaware of the flaws in the strategy, since in both the Popular Front and post-Liberation situation, after important reforms had been enacted, the non-Communist Left simply walked away from alliance with the PCF into the arms of the Right. A useful source of these episodes is André Donneur, *L'Alliance fragile*, Montreal 1984.

1940s—nationalizations, strengthening the labour movement, economic planning, achieving international independence—all cast in nationalistic language.³⁶ Implementation of this programme would create a situation of 'true democracy' (later 'advanced democracy'), which would in turn prepare the way for a transition to socialism.

Proponents of this approach could point to the tremendous outpouring of popular support which united frontism helped to create in the Popular Front and Resistance-Liberation years. But the stimuli of anti-fascism and a positive image of the USSR, so important in the 1930s and 1940s, would be of little help in the 1960s.³⁷ Moreover, in the Popular Front and Resistance period the Party had sought to use alliance politics to shape French diplomacy and win shorter-run reforms. Even these limited goals, pursued to take advantage of contexts of national emergency in both cases, had proven difficult to achieve. The promotion of basic change in France, the goal of its new united frontism, was an altogether larger task. There were good reasons to be worried about the Party's strategic choice in the 1960s, therefore, all of which followed from the shortcomings which had been visible in past united frontism, from the greatly changed context, and from the much larger ambitions of the new period.

The PCF's judgment that it would be sufficient to dust off a strategy from the 1930s to face an entirely new situation was compounded by its belligerent refusal to grant that French society might be different from what it had been in Popular Front years. Beginning in 1955, for example, Secretary-General Maurice Thorez produced a series of official commentaries on the movement of capital—which became the Party's map of French capitalism for the next decade—asserting the relative and absolute pauperization of French workers.³⁸ In consequence Communists discounted, rather than reflecting upon, the transformations which were being worked by an expanding economy. The Party's pro-natalist positions on birth control, enunciated at about the same time by Thorez's *compagne*, Jeannette Vermeersch, likewise signaled PCF blindness to social changes transforming the family and labour force.³⁹

It was the aftermath of the PCF's response to 1956 which was most

³⁶ The first full sketch for a new common programme came at the PCF's XVth Congress in 1959. The 1972 Common Programme was strikingly prefigured there.

³⁷ De Gaulle's adroit manoeuvres had by the 1960s routed the Algerian *néfaste* and the fascist threat which they had represented. His determined efforts to give the military a new geopolitical mission through the *force de frappe* and relative autonomy in Europe from the United States eventually wiped out the deep wounds of successive colonial defeats.

³⁸ Thorez was undoubtedly acting out of a combination of reverence for sacred texts and immediate concern to combat the rampant influence of Pierre Mendès-France and his 'modernism'. The Thorez articles, which appeared in party journals in 1955–56, were republished as *La Paupérisation des travailleurs français*, Paris 1961. As an immediately retrospective version of what French workers had undergone during the first post-Liberation decade, Thorez's argument was not completely implausible. It was as economic projection that his writings were absurd.

³⁹ Birth control, which was about to transform the family lives and lifestyles of working-class and middle strata French, was denounced by the party as a Malthusian plot against workers by capital and the Americans. See Jeannette Vermeersch, 'Faut-il choisir entre la paix du monde, l'interdiction de la bombe atomique: ou le contrôle de la natalité? Contre le néo-malthusianisme réactionnaire', in *Les Femmes dans la nation*, Paris 1962.

damaging, however. Maurice Thorez, a staunch opponent of Khrushchev's reformism, had bluntly refused to hear and heed the call for de-Stalinization, a refusal further evidenced in the PCF's responses to Eastern European revolts in 1956.⁴⁰ This refusal was particularly damaging inside the party, where rigidly undemocratic democratic centralism lasted into the 1960s.⁴¹ To Maurice Thorez, who died in 1964, nothing in the PCF's changing environment, including calls for self-criticism coming from the USSR in the Khrushchev years, justified much change in the PCF itself.⁴² And Thorez's last purges, of premature Eurocommunists in the *Affaire Servin-Casanova* of 1961⁴³ and Italianist students slightly later,⁴⁴ eliminated the elements which might have been able to propose serious new alternatives.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the end of the Algerian War in 1962, electoral and institutional movements strongly comforted the PCF's decision to pursue alliance politics. While the PCF suffered a net electoral loss of 25 per cent in the transition to the Gaullist Republic in 1958, its vote did stick at around 22 per cent after the new Republic normalized in the early 1960s, while that of the SFIO nosedived. This electoral situation, plus the abolition of proportional representation by the Gaullists, obliged the Socialists to rethink the question of alliances. Thus the PCF, despite its manifest inability to reconceptualize its own strategy and organization to keep abreast of the social and economic changes taking place around it, jumped eagerly towards the new united front.

False Start for Left Unity: 1964-68

After slow but sure steps towards formalizing a new alliance of the Left in the early 1960s,⁴⁶ sometimes accompanied by doctrinal concessions

⁴⁰ Initially Thorez obliged the PCF to deny that Khrushchev had ever made the 'Stalin's crimes' speech (even though Thorez had read it), calling it a fabrication of the bourgeois press. Thorez's next response, after insisting that the core of the speech was the issue of 'personality cult' (rather than 'crimes'), was that the PCF did not have such a problem.

⁴¹ The best treatment of these years, if inadequate, is to be found in Robicoux, *Histoire intérieure*, Vol. 2, Chapter 7. See also Bourderon et al., *PCF, despas et problèmes*.

⁴² As we will see, in the 1980s the party leadership itself officially condemned the Thorezian reformulation of united frontism. See Georges Marchais's report to the 25th Congress of the PCF in February 1985 in *Cahiers du Communisme*, March-April 1985.

⁴³ Servin, Casanova and a number of others were the bearers of 'Italian' ideas about change in France and how to cope with it, and were perceived by Thorez as Khrushchevites. There is no proper research to report about the Servin-Casanova affair, despite its pivotal importance for the PCF. It is worth looking at Philippe Robicoux's *Notre génération communiste*, Paris 1977.

⁴⁴ Interestingly enough, Thorez's man on the spot here was Roland Leroy, who later became the leader of the militant autonomists struggling inside the party leadership against united frontism. On the students, Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman's recent *Génération*, Paris 1987, has many faults, but its greatest virtue is to tell the story of this purge in detail for the first time, connecting it to the development of anti-Communism in the *gauchiste* leaders who were to be so important in May-June 1968.

⁴⁵ Here there was a very great irony. Waldeck Rochet, the new leader, was a confirmed Khrushchevian. Yet, given Thorez's 1964 departure, virtually simultaneous with Khrushchev's, the new leadership was obliged to live in a post-reformist, Brezhnevite international setting.

⁴⁶ The PCF and SFIO negotiated a limited exchange of votes in the 1962 legislative elections. Talks between the two parties continued on and off thereafter.

to woo the Socialists,⁴⁷ the 1965 Presidential campaign and a new PCF Secretary-General, Waldeck Rochet, brought more concrete actions. When the non-Communist Left failed to field a centrist anti-Communist candidate, François Mitterrand immediately presented himself on the very different strategic grounds of Left Unity.⁴⁸ Even though Mitterrand gave little to the PCF in programmatic terms, his willingness to end Communist isolation was enough for the Party leadership. In the campaign which followed, Mitterrand played his cards shrewdly, the PCF supported him loyally, and he won 45 per cent of the vote in the runoff, prefiguring both the end of de Gaulle's career and the possibility of a new Left alliance. Between 1965 and the events of 1968 the Left made slow progress towards clearer agreement on programme and towards greater electoral strength.⁴⁹

The gamble on Mitterrand was taken by a PCF which was not at all unified around its strategy. Mitterrand was not an admired figure in the PCF and supporting him in 1965—however one felt about Left Unity—was not an easy thing for many Communists to do. Moreover, some Communists resisted any attenuation of old-fashioned defensive *cautélisme*, preferring their party to be a tribune for the oppressed rather than a strategic actor.⁵⁰ Still others worried about the deeper logic of united frontism. Supporting Mitterrand, given Fifth Republic presidentialism, was almost certain to confer considerable new political resources on him, which he would undoubtedly use at some later point against the PCF itself.⁵¹

The longer-term problem of strategic disagreement was more complex. The PCF under Maurice Thorez had failed to adapt its outlooks and institutions to meet changing conditions in France. In an alliance, it

⁴⁷ At its 17th Congress in 1964, for example, the party decided that 'the idea, promoted by Stalin, that the existence of a one-party system was a necessary condition for the transition to socialism' was a 'false generalization from the particular historical circumstances of the October Revolution' and that cooperation and entente between Communists and Socialists would be possible 'not only for today, but for tomorrow'.

⁴⁸ The anticipated candidate was the *néo* Mayor of Marseilles, Gaston Defferre, who would have put together an anti-Communist Left-Centre coalition, including Christian Democrats. At the last minute, however, both the Socialist apparatus and the Christian Democrats pulled back in disagreement over the Catholic School issue. See Georges Suffert, *De Defferre à Mitterrand*, Paris 1966.

⁴⁹ The non-Communist Left developed a *Fédération* (the FGDS) of the *néo*, Mitterrand's *Convergence des Institutions Républicaines* and the many 'modernist' clubs which had developed after 1961 (the club Jean Moulin, *Calvès*, etc.) to fight the 1967 legislative elections, at which the Left very nearly deprived the Gaullist front of a majority. Moreover, in early 1968 the FGDS and PCF signed a common electoral platform which fell far short of agreement on a wide range of issues, but was of considerable symbolic importance.

⁵⁰ Georges Lavan uses this term first in Frédéric Bon et al., *La Communisation en France*, Paris 1969. See also Georges Lavan, *À quoi sert le PCF?*, Paris 1981.

⁵¹ A 1962 reform created direct popular elections to the presidency. These, accompanied by the growth of television, tended to personalise politics. Presidential candidates might acquire political resources which transcended parties and consequences. Added to this was the huge power which the new presidency conferred on its incumbent, especially if he had a parliamentary majority on his side. The electoral law also affected the Left's situation. Presidential elections proceeded from a first round, when virtually anyone could run, to a runoff between the two most successful candidates. This system conferred great prominence on the second-round candidates. The runoff battle, if it were between a Left and Right candidate, would almost always be over centrist votes and would favour the more moderate Left candidates. Other things being equal, direct presidential elections were likely to harm the PCF.

would have to do so rapidly or create vast new opportunities for the non-Communist Left. Inchoate, but real, fractions inside the Party opposing Left Unity would almost certainly act as a brake on PCF adaptation and, to the degree to which they weighed on internal politics, make united frontism even less likely to succeed. And, as this happened, benefiting from the 'we told you so effect', others would often find themselves in a position to demand basic strategic change.

The distance which the PCF needed to cover if it were ever to master processes of social change became clearer in the years around May-June 1968. By the mid-1960s, despite all of its problems, the PCF had become the locus of much lively and interesting intellectual debate. We have already mentioned the Italianism of PCF students in the early 1960s. *La Pensée*, the Party's official theoretical journal, attracted much attention even beyond France, as did *La Nouvelle Critique*. And it is hardly necessary to mention the influence of Louis Althusser and his followers, whose efforts to forge a new Marxism in the light of changes in French social thought became one of the most powerful currents in Western Marxism for a time.

Alas, most of what was creative and promising in all this was frowned upon and often repressed by the PCF leadership. The consequences of such disapproval had, by the later 1960s, led to a decline of respect and credibility for the Party among the intelligentsia. Activist students, the detonators of May-June, did not have the sympathy for the PCF that their 1950s predecessors had had, looking instead to the Third World for new vanguards and utopias. The PCF lost its hold over many young Left intellectuals as well, with structuralism and Althusserianism-become-Maoism both exercising more appeal than the Party's Comintern-style views. Other parts of the intelligentsia were increasingly encapsulated in a Centre-Left modernism purveyed by weeklies like *L'Express* and, above all, *Nouvel Observateur*.

May-June 1968 underscored the extent of the Party's alienation from the intelligentsia. Almost all of the purged former leaders of PCF student groups appeared on the streets of Paris as the *cadres* of a multiform, ill-defined student uprising, conferring a profoundly anti-PCF outlook upon it.⁵² The Party's response, which posited that student agitation was being perverted from its natural lines by *gauchiste* agitators objectively serving monopoly capital when they were not in the pay of the police, compounded its problems.⁵³ Still, one ought not to exaggerate the weight of strictly student events in May-June 1968. For what really brought France to the brink of revolution was the largest strike in the

⁵² Hamon and Rotman, *Génération*, shows this. See also, from the vast literature of the May period itself, Henri Weber and Daniel Bensad, *Mai 1968, révolutions générales*, Paris 1968.

⁵³ Roger Garaudy, the party's official intellectual leader and philosopher, eventually broke with the rest of the leadership on this issue and on the party's later support of 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia. Garaudy's criticisms of the PCF's behaviour in May-June 1968 were made in the interests of 'opportunistic' tactics. Nevertheless, it is clear that he understood what was happening vastly better than his colleagues. See Roger Garaudy, *The Crisis in Communism: The Turning Point of Socialism*, New York 1972, and *Toute la vérité*, Paris 1970. See also Pierre Grémion's *Paris-Prague*, Paris 1983, an indispensable tool for understanding movements in the French intelligentsia during this period, despite its manifest lack of sympathy for the Left.

history of modern capitalism, overwhelmingly the product of mobilization decided by the CGT and PCF.⁵⁴ Alas, neither party nor union knew quite what to do with this huge outpouring of working-class energy. The slight progress towards Left Unity that had occurred prior to May broke down as François Mitterrand and others scrambled for ways to exclude the PCF and manipulate the movements to their advantage. United frontism was therefore out, for the moment. Moreover, the huge risks of the Party moving forward on its own were obvious.⁵⁵ Eventually the PCF could think of nothing better than to accept the Grenelle accords, bargaining away the great strike for big concessions on wages, hours and working conditions. The May–June crisis was thus brought to an end by a *de facto* accord between an ageing General trying to save his regime and a Communist party trying to salvage a self-defeating strategy. The popular mobilization declined, at first slowly, then much more precipitously, and legislative elections in June led to massive defeat for the Left.

The Party's inability to cope with the student movement of 1968 overshadowed its problems with the workers themselves, but such problems also existed. The CGT, directly in the line of fire of economic modernization, had consistently reacted with militancy and activism, denouncing capital and capitalism in theory and rhetoric, and striking whenever the balance of forces made it feasible to do so.⁵⁶ But the ways in which the CGT defined its tasks, so as to be congruent with the PCF in the political realm, created difficulties. Workers were told, for example, to expect a new order to come from the top from the activities of politicians.⁵⁷ Nested inside this political vision were shorter-run economic demands which made the day-to-day workplace CGT behave much like more moderate unions elsewhere. Furthermore, because the CGT wanted to inculcate very simple political themes which unified the working class, it tended to downplay local struggles which did not fit and to overlook the needs and militancy of new categories in France's changing workforce.⁵⁸

The CGT thus appeared stodgy, bureaucratized and somewhat out of touch. In consequence, the CFDT, its major rival, was allowed to make considerable gains from, and to embrace the *antogestionnaire* mantle of,

⁵⁴ One of us tried to say this at the time. See George Ross, 'The May Revolt in France and the Role of the Communist Party', *New Politics*, Volume VII, No. 1, 1968. For a much more thorough and documented review to the same point, see George Ross, *Workers and Communists in France*, Berkeley 1982, Chapter 7.

⁵⁵ Such a course would have isolated the party and given the French political class and the bourgeoisie the pretext for which they had been waiting for decades to crush the Communist phenomenon in France, perhaps by military force.

⁵⁶ The CGT was very careful not to strike at moments, particularly during electoral campaigns, when such actions might hurt the Left's chances.

⁵⁷ This was because it wanted to shape and direct working-class action towards consciousness of the need for a united front. The CGT tried to use its organizational power to promote unity around simple, very general and national demands, communicating a message that only major *political* change, beginning with a united front, could bring lasting solutions.

⁵⁸ Overly militant struggles of a narrow kind might divide rather than unify, the CGT believed. For similar reasons, it had a tendency to downplay the particular struggles of segments of the workforce—minorsities, job categories with few members, youth, women, immigrants. It could not, of course, ignore these groups altogether, but it would consistently try to assimilate their demands to those of the large working-class aggregates which the CGT was trying to create and maintain.

the 'events'.⁵⁹ The CGT, like the PCF, was stuck on an old model of mobilization.

III. Crises in the Making: 1968–1974

Capital From Gaullist Modernization to Crisis

May–June 1968 changed the political world faced by French capitalists. General de Gaulle's departure in 1969 foreshadowed the loss of charismatic political resources for France's modernizing project and, more importantly, weakened and redefined this project itself.⁶⁰ De Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, formerly a top official in the Rothschild Bank, was less visionary and more conservative than the General. In particular, the new President planned to jettison *dirigisme* and clip the wings of the modernizing high civil service in order to give capital new space to prosper by itself in the European and international markets.

Returning to the market—less through doctrinaire liberalism than by a relaxation of statism—also involved facing the new power of French labour, a change in the balance of social forces which made efforts to de-statize and de-politicize labour relations politically advisable.⁶¹ Here Pompidou's first Prime Minister, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, after devaluing the franc in the summer of 1969 to undercut labour's wage victory of the previous year, took the unusual step of attempting a mild social democratization from the Right. Stumping for a New Society, as the policy was hyperbolically labelled, Chaban-Delmas set out to encourage decentralized collective bargaining and a neo-corporatist public-sector incomes policy.⁶² Capital and labour, however, both resisted these efforts and succeeded in discrediting them by 1973.

The failure of social democratization from the Right obliged capital to face an insistent and demanding working class during a moment of intense economic expansion. For much of Pompidou's presidency (which lasted until 1973) there was a paroxysm of investment and growth which substantially exceeded the rates of the de Gaulle years. Real wages also began to go up rapidly, however, as did the inflation rate, fed by international pressures and an exceptionally high rate of French savings, and corporate profits began to decline.⁶³ Pressures for higher rates of productivity also stimulated industrial conflict, especially among new industrial workers and semi-skilled factory operatives rebelling against speedup and deteriorating working conditions.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ We have discussed all of this in considerable detail in Ross, *Workers and Communists*.

⁶⁰ Lecomture, *De Gaulle*, Chapter 27 discusses the last 300 days of de Gaulle. See also Georges Pompidou, *Pour rétablir la liberté*, Paris 1982.

⁶¹ The Left had nearly won the 1967 elections and thoughtful strategists on the Right suspected that the dynamic of 1967 would be a much more reliable indicator than the outcome of the 1968 elections.

⁶² Interestingly enough, the political godfather of this programme was none other than Jacques Delors, then serving as 'social' adviser to Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas. Delors would take up the same cudgels as Finance Minister after 1981.

⁶³ On the evolution of real wages and profits see Jean-Claude Delamunay, *Salaries et prix-noms en France, depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1984, esp. pp. 221ff.

⁶⁴ For an overview of this process see Robert Boyer, 'Wage Labour, Capital Accumulation and Crisis, 1969–82' in Mark Kesselman and Guy Groux, eds, *The French Workers' Movement*, London 1984.

Dark clouds were already gathering before 1974, then. French capital, dragged into the twentieth century by the state, had modernized without appreciably bettering its relative international position. As this had happened, the economy also had become more and more dependent on international trade. When the benignly expansionist international economy of the boom years began to disappear in the 1970s, warfare over market shares broke out among France, newly industrializing countries and more successful, better endowed advanced capitalist economies. Worse still, French capital misperceived this situation almost completely, ignoring its own relative backwardness and hoping that difficulties would be temporary.

The first oil shock, coinciding with the beginning of Giscard d'Estaing's presidency, brought little recognition of the minefield that French capitalism had begun to cross. Government and capital both responded to inflationary pressures as but another cyclical downturn susceptible to short-term Keynesian techniques. The results were rapidly rising unemployment levels, even higher inflation rates, and the end of pre-1974 levels of growth.⁶⁵ Moreover, French industry had ceased to create new jobs and the capacity of the state to do so was ever more seriously taxed by rising unemployment and declining revenues. Nor did increased unemployment immediately weaken labour: strikes stayed at a relatively high level, and election results in 1973 and 1974 indicated growing strength of the Left parties.

Capital and the political Right were caught between an economic rock and a political hard place. Had they been perceptive enough to recognize the changing situation, which they were not, they would still have been hard put to find much to do about it without losing political power. Whatever the economic bill came to, they *had* to temporize for political reasons. In the long run this would favour the Left. The many mistakes of French capital, concealed by the general postwar boom, began to surface. The Right, in power for a generation without interruption, would bear the responsibility for rising unemployment, inflation and international trade deficits.

Union de la Gauche: Lutte Finale?

By 1968 the PCF had not lost everything, but it had squandered huge opportunities. Its strategy exaggerated statism, placed undue confidence in the viability of agreements between parties at the top, and subordinated rank-and-file mobilization to electoralism and the tasks of coalitional manipulations. The Party also demonstrated an incapacity to cope with mobilization from sources which it could not completely control, misperceived modifications of the labour force, misunderstood the expansion of intermediary social strata and ignored changes in the role and size of the intelligentsia, while prompting the CGT to pursue problematic trade-union tactics. All this meant that the PCF had created large new openings for social democracy.

⁶⁵ See Christian Stoffaes, *La Grande arnaque*, Paris 1978, Chapter III for a description of this period and Alain Cotat, *La France et l'impératif mondial*, Paris 1978, Part II, chapter 1.

The major event in the immediate aftermath of May–June 1968 was the reconstruction of the non-Communist Left into a new *Parti Socialiste*.⁶⁶ In 1971 a large number of competing fragments federated under the leadership of François Mitterrand. Reading the new PS roughly from Left to Right, one found the *marxisant* technocrats of CERES (whose social constituency was the new middle strata and intelligentsia), traditional social democrats (often based in the urban machines of industrial areas), Keynesian municipal socialists of one kind or another, ex-Radicals and liberal *notables* (including many of the followers of François Mitterrand, often with clientelistic bases), and centrist technocrats imbued with a combination of international beliefs about economic management and a progressive Christian social consciousness. What might sound like a lot of angry cats tied in a bag was, in fact, a cleverly structured organization. Since strength inside the Party depended upon the support and attention garnered in mobilization, each tendency was encouraged to do its own politics and produce its own rhetoric. Internal pluralism had the advantage of allowing the new PS to appear almost all things to all people and therefore to reach out widely both leftward and to the Centre. The forward movement of this political centipede was nonetheless purposeful, since from its foundation the internal majority of the Party supported Mitterrand's strategy of Left Unity.

Mitterrand's strategy led towards negotiations with the PCF and the signature, in June 1972, of a Left Common Programme. Except for vagueness on issues of defence and foreign policy (where the two parties agreed to disagree), this document was simply a tamer reproduction of what the Communists had been advocating for some time. The new coalition would expand the welfare state, raise wages and benefits, operate extensive nationalizations and instal democratic management at firm level co-ordinated with democratic planning nationally, greatly increase the rights of unions and workers, and engage in a host of other reforms to increase democratic participation locally and regionally.

The radicalism of this document—it was considerably more ambitious than the programmes of other European Lefts—surprised anyone unaware of Mitterrand's strategic game. Mitterrand, concerned primarily with coming to power himself by strengthening the Socialists electorally at the PCF's expense, saw the programme more as an instrument to exploit the flaws in Communist strategy than as a genuine commitment. By allying leftwards and giving in to the PCF on issues of programme, Mitterrand was buying a certificate of good Left conduct which would blur political distinctions between the PS and PCF. This certificate would then help the PS to win new support from soft sectors of the PCF electorate more attached to the Left than to the PCF itself. Movement towards the PS might then be magnified by the 'presidential effect' that produces tactical voting for the party which appears to have the best chance of winning. Mitterrand could also count on much fresh support

⁶⁶ One has an *embarras de choix* for sources on this process. In English, see David Bell and Byron Cridle, *The French Socialist Party*, Oxford 1984, Chapter 3, R. W. Johnson, *The Long March of the French Left*, London 1982. In French see Hugues Portelli, *Le Socialisme français* and Jacques Kergoat, *Le Parti socialiste*, Paris 1983. For some of the flavour of the smoke-filled back rooms, see A. Du Roy and R. Schneider, *Le Remue de la rose*, Paris 1982.

from leftward-moving new middle strata, politically homeless after May-June 1968.

The logic of Left unity meant that even if the Left as a whole was likely to grow in strength, one party's gain would come at the other's expense. Moreover, the circumstances of the 1970s greatly favoured the Socialists, putting the PCF in a complex, and potentially contradictory, situation. Much of the PCF leadership knew this by the late 1960s and was aware that united frontist success, if possible at all, would depend on rapidly modernizing many of the Party's traditional postures. Thus the PCF's theoretical perspectives were wrenched away from Thorez's miserabilist absurdities towards state monopoly capitalist theory, an attempt to change the PCF's vision of the working class which considerably modified traditional *ouvriérisme* and retheorized the material foundations for an alliance between workers and intermediary strata.⁶⁷ The Party, painfully and partially, also began to take some distance from the Soviet model, acknowledging that 'actually existing socialism' lacked the democracy appropriate to its progressive social arrangements and provided little guidance towards a *socialisme aux contours de la France*.⁶⁸ Organizationally, Party leaders solicited greater debate in public and at major party occasions, relaxed recruitment standards and opened more space for discussion by the rank and file. In consequence, members flocked to the Party, particularly from the new middle strata. Public interest in its politics and leaders grew significantly and, according to opinion poll evidence, by the mid-1970s the PCF had become more legitimate than at any other point in its history.

However, the rapidity of such movement exacerbated inner-party conflict about strategy.⁶⁹ The top leadership was powerful enough to push united frontism forward after 1972, but a growing opposition was constantly on the alert for the first major signs of failure or opportunist deviation and placed severe constraints on the leadership's ability to modernize. In organizational terms the more uncertainty there was about how to proceed, the more the leadership, however much it

⁶⁷ The groundwork for this was done by the PCF Central Committee's *Section Économique* led by Henri Jourdan and young economists like Paul Boccaux, Philippe Henzog, Jean-Claude Delannay and others. The work was first presented in *Économie et Politique* in the later 1960s and then gathered together into a new party manual, *Traité d'économie politique (manuel)*, *Le Capitalisme monopoliste d'État*, Paris 1972, 2 volumes.

⁶⁸ Georges Marchais's book *Le Défi démocratique* (Paris 1973), written in large part by Pierre Juquin, is an essential document here. Juquin, who was the party point man on such matters, also authored an important pamphlet on civil liberties, *Vos droits* (Paris 1973). Jean Kanapa, Marchais's real brain, was behind much of this and himself participated in an important television programme in 1975 in which he acknowledged the use of labour camps and psychiatric hospitals for political prisoners in the USSR.

⁶⁹ Published excerpts from the July 1972 Central Committee Meeting to ratify the signature of the Common Programme indicate that there was considerable malaise and, possibly, opposition to this important step. See François Billoux, *L'Union est au combat*, Paris 1973.

disagreed internally, felt it necessary to *maintain* the PCF's traditionally undemocratic democratic centralism.⁷⁰

IV. Denouement: Converging Contradictions

The problems of the PCF were not all internal, however. In the 1973 legislative elections the PCF outpolled the PS, but not by much and for the last time. In the presidential elections of 1974 Mitterrand was once again designated as candidate of the Left and came within one per cent of winning. United frontism was indeed propelling the Left towards success, but the PS was benefiting disproportionately. In a series of by-elections in autumn 1974, the Socialists began to make serious inroads into the PCF's own electorate.

Roller Coaster: The Crises of 1977-78

By the mid-1970s, conclusive evidence that part of its electoral base was now in Mitterrand's sights pushed the PCF into one of the most turbulent periods in its history. Beginning in 1974 leaders who opposed united frontism saw their fears resoundingly confirmed and moved to increase their power inside the party.⁷¹ Not yet strong enough to reverse PCF strategy completely, they were able to force a new tactical compromise. The Party would maintain its united frontist directions while, at the same time, accelerating efforts to undercut the growing Socialist advantage by asserting a newly up-dated PCF identity within *Union de la Gauche*.

This compromise led first, in 1974-75, to a year of attacks on the Socialists as potential traitors to Left ideas and programmes. Next, in 1976, the PCF lived a frenzied moment of doctrinal and political innovation—its Eurocommunist period, when it moved closer to the Italian and Spanish Communists and joined them in questioning Soviet hegemony in the international Communist movement.⁷² At its 22nd Congress in 1976, the PCF officially abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat, in effect jettisoning traditional Marxist-Leninist theories of the state.⁷³ Henceforth, the PCF claimed, the primary contradiction of state monopoly capitalism was its lack of democracy.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ This was either out of adamant traditionalism or out of fear, variously, that democratization might give advantage to opponents and/or lead to an explosion of inner-party conflict which would be destructive at a crucial point. We have written about this first in Jane Jensen and George Ross, 'The Uncharted Waters of De-Stalinization: The Uneven Evolution of the Parti Communiste Français', *Politics and Society*, Volume 9, No. 3, 1980, and in George Ross, 'Organisation and Strategy in the Decline of French Communism', in Ralph Miliband et al., eds., *The Socialist Register 1987* (London 1987).

⁷¹ Here the most extraordinary event was the PCF's 21st Congress in Fall 1974. The leadership had produced a most optimistic and ~~ambitious~~ Congress resolution which was then modified into a much more piously document. Such things rarely happened in the PCF. It appears that the anti-united frontists, now advocating a full-blown militant autonomy strategy, had gained new power. See François Hincker, *Le Parti communiste au carrefour*, Paris 1981, esp. Chapter 4.

⁷² There were several spectacular visits by Party leaders to one another during this moment, but the most important specific event was the Eurocommunist coalition's resistance to Soviet strategic goals at the September 1976 Berlin Conference of European Communist Parties. Jean Karspe was the PCF's tactician in all this.

⁷³ For the documents and discussion see PCF, *Le Socialisme pour la France*, Paris 1977, and Jean Favre, François Hincker and Lucien Sève, *Les Communistes et l'État*, Paris 1977.

⁷⁴ The PCF also changed its position on French defence policy in 1977, accepting nuclear weapons

During this period the PCF became a very lively place to be, recruiting more and more new members, even from the intelligentsia and new middle strata.⁷⁵ Behind the scenes, however, Eurocommunization sharpened internal conflict, particularly over the relationship with the Soviet Union.⁷⁶ The response to the furor over Solzhenitsyn provided a good illustration. Torn between condemning either censorship in the Soviet Union or the anti-Soviet political use to which the issue was put in the West, the PCF chose to categorize the whole business as an anti-Soviet campaign. In doing so it fell into an obvious and very costly trap. Eurocommunization subsequently offered a way out, but at the cost of setting another trap. Pro-Soviet elements inside the party, increasingly backed by Soviet pressure, moved into a *de facto* coalition with anti-united frontists.⁷⁷ Steering a coherent course from the centre, as Secretary-General Georges Marchais was wont to do, became much more difficult.

The behaviour of the PS in this period complicated the PCF's internal situation. At the *Assises du Socialisme* in October 1974 the PS, the Rocardian wing of the PSU, and delegates from the CFDT met to discuss injecting a strong *antogestionnaire* content into PS politics. Mitterrand knew that most *antogestionnaires* opposed *Union de la Gauche* and the Common Programme, desiring a different, more centrist, PS strategy. But he was also resolved not to abandon *Union de la Gauche*. His next step, attempting to coopt the *antogestionnaires* without giving anything but words to them politically, followed from this logic. The PS remained publicly committed to the Jacobin and statist Left Common Programme while increasingly presenting itself as *antogestionnaire*. In addition, the Rocardians were admitted into the PS where, almost immediately, Mitterrand altered the composition of the leadership majority by pushing the leftist CERES group into opposition.⁷⁸

These complicated manoeuvres were meant both to increase the PS's electoral base and to give Mitterrand a freer policy hand with the PCF in the governmental situation which almost everyone sensed would soon come. The Communist leadership as a whole thus grew more wary of the PS, while anti-united frontists acquired yet another asset in their struggle against the Party's declared strategy. Moreover, the results were

⁷⁵ The liveliness was sometimes a bit perverse. When Georges Marchais announced, on television and without prior debate in the Party at large, that the 'dictatorship' clause would be dropped from the statutes there was a major hue and cry from the Party's intellectuals, some of whom denounced the *form* of the decision (which did rather crudely illustrate the lack of inner-party democracy), while others, the Althusserians in the first instance, denounced its content. See Etienne Balibar, *XXIII Congrès*, Paris 1977.

⁷⁶ The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 provided an early test. The PCF initially condemned the Soviet action, a first. Then later, after considerable Soviet pressure, it gave full support to Soviet normalization policies. Whatever credit the PCF got for the first action it lost by the second.

⁷⁷ The leaders of the USSR did not like the Atlanticist François Mitterrand one bit. The Soviet Ambassador's unprecedented official visit to Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand's 1974 opponent, during the electoral campaign, was a gesture of endorsement of Giscard. Things got worse after this, until they reached their peak in 1977. Jean Pabon, in *La Guerre des camarades* (Paris 1981), published a long letter from the Soviet to the French leadership sent in March 1977 in which the Soviets threatened to undermine the Marchais leadership and, perhaps, split the PCF altogether, should 'anti-Sovietism' continue. Whatever else such pressure did, it certainly did galvanize pro-Soviet elements in the PCF Central Committee.

⁷⁸ Most of the *CFDTers* who participated in the *Assises*, on the other hand, walked away embittered

complex even beyond the exacerbation of PCF-PS tensions. Mitterrand's reassertion of unity politics after 1974 crystallized a centre-left oppositional coalition within the PS which bided its time until it might exercise greater influence over, if not actually control, the PS, and thus develop a major campaign for technocratic modernism, anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism. Michel Rocard and his followers were clearly the relays for this strategy inside the PS.

At a deeper level, segments of the new middle strata and intelligentsia began to conclude that neither the PCF nor the PS, nor a fortiori *Union de la Gauche*, really addressed their concerns. Despite continuing to vote on the Left, they slipped towards the orbit of the technocratic modernists who had addressed these issues and, perhaps more importantly, controlled many of the major institutions from which the intelligentsia and new middle strata took their cue. *Libération*, *Nouvel Observateur* and Parisian publishing houses disseminated anti-Communist, anti-Soviet, anti-Third World, pro-American, pluralist politics in the name of *antio-gestion*. These actions coincided with growing fears in Right-Centre regime circles about changes in the PCF and about the prospect of Left victory in 1978. What emerged was a spiral of ideological hysteria and an apostate galaxy of anti-totalitarian, ex-Maoist, ex-*gauchiste* publicists like André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy, the 'new philosophers'. The foundation stones of the Socialists' later cultural revolution were being laid.

The 1977 Municipal Elections—when the United Left won a majority—marked the beginning of a turn. The PCF's leap into innovation had failed to halt growing Socialist gains. Reflection on this caused the PCF's unstable post-1974 internal compromise to come unglued. Advocates of militant autonomy finally triumphed within the leadership and the Party prepared to abandon united frontism. There was a certain logic behind this strategic volte-face. Since united frontism had been destructive for French Communism, the leadership felt under increasing pressure to burn the bridges with the Socialists and to turn on social democracy as an ally of capital.⁷⁹

There were other logical options available at this point, however. The balance of electoral power between the PCF and PS in the mid-1970s had begun to shift in the latter's favour, but the change was not yet a disaster. The PCF had not really fallen appreciably behind the PS electorally in 1977 and 1978, even if PS support in opinion polls had begun to balloon. In tactical terms this meant that the PCF, had it not terminated *Union de la Gauche*, might have been able to claim a substantial number of important ministries in any post-1978 Left government. Furthermore, any such Left government, headed by François Mitterrand, would have had to cohabit with President Giscard d'Estaing. Mitterrand, faced with an exiguous economic situation and obliged to play political chess with

⁷⁹ Fabien (*Le Guerre*, op. cit.), invoking documents of a leading PCF figure, claims that the abandonment of united frontism occurred on Soviet initiatives. There are solid reasons to believe that the Soviets did not like united frontism, but to argue that this was the only reason for the party's shift is to deny the very real logic of the situation. From a purely domestic point of view, united frontism, as the party had defined it, had turned into a political disaster.

a President of the Right, would have had his hands full. As Giscard tried to undermine his likely opponent before the presidential election of 1981, Mitterrand and the Socialists would undoubtedly have temporized and backtracked. In government—not simply in a token way, but backed by a unified party and strong labour unions—the PCF would have been in a very good position to reassert its identity as a guardian of possibilities for change. And it would have had a very good chance of reconstructing its strategic position, gaining at the expense of a compromised PS.

The Break

In summer 1977, instead of playing out this alternative strategy, the PCF broke completely with the Socialists. The grounds used were that the PS, engaged in a 'right turn', had reneged on its commitment to the Common Programme. There was substance in these accusations, to be sure, but the real goal of the Communist leadership was to abandon *Union de la Gauche* before the Party was further weakened and to accelerate its campaign to modernize party doctrine and rebuild a specific PCF identity. Hence the new commitments to decentralization, energetic mobilization and the idea that socialism could be won 'step by step' in *autogestionnaire* struggle.⁸⁰ Between 1978 and 1981, when the PCF would present its own candidate in the presidential elections, the leadership thought that the Party would have time to digest its new *autogestionnaire* strategy, reassert its identity and recoup its strength. The consequence of this choice, however, was that the Left, seemingly more interested in mutual character assassination than governance, lost the 1978 legislative elections which it might otherwise have won.

This tactical logic proved very costly. To begin with, the PCF—justifiably or not—received the bulk of the blame for the Left's defeat. François Mitterrand and the Socialists, presenting themselves as *nostre pour deux* behind the Common Programme, gained relatively.⁸¹ Then, after months of sectarian attacks on the PS, the PCF leadership turned around and worked a short-run deal with the PS between the two rounds of the elections in March 1978. Everyone was now thoroughly confused. Had the PCF meant what it had been saying, had it been simply acting cynically, or both?⁸²

The abrupt strategic shift of 1977–78 proved to be an utter organizational disaster for the PCF. More than two decades of united frontism, however ill-conceived, not only had been convincing to the *peuple de gauche*, but had made a substantial number of Communists into believers as well. Perhaps more important, the years of *Union de la Gauche* had

⁸⁰ This was meant to fill the void left by the abandonment of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and all of the neo-Bolshevik strategic apparitions which went with it.

⁸¹ *Unitaire pour deux* meant being united even though the PCF did not want it. This posture allowed the PS to blame the PCF for the collapse of *Union de la Gauche*.

⁸² One speculation was that the party expected that the Left, despite its divisions, would still win enough votes in the first round of the elections to contemplate success in the runoff. At this point the PCF would be in a very strong position to negotiate with the PS on programme, the division of ministries and the timetable of reforms. Another scenario had the PCF anticipating defeat from division. We simply do not know what the calculations were here.

attracted hundreds of thousands of new Communists, particularly from the intelligentsia and urban middle strata, who believed themselves part of a massive project to rebuild French Communism and the French Left. The change of 1977–78, decreed from above, and accompanied by a return to miserabilist rhetoric of a transparently electoralist kind, galvanized these groups into an inner-party movement of dissent the magnitude of which the PCF had not known for decades.⁸³ The leadership then manoeuvred to destroy this opposition with all the resources of the PCF's unreformed undemocratic centralism. In consequence, pro-unity front and Eurocommunist *militants* left the party by the tens of thousands, along with the virtual totality of Communist intellectuals. The forces which remained were quite as important as those which departed, however. Traditional workerists and pro-Soviet elements found their power enhanced. This, in turn, rendered illusory any real hopes of steering the PCF in an *antigestionniste* strategic direction. Instead what emerged was an incoherence of attempted adaptation, the most traditional defensive *ouvriérisme* and ineptness on international affairs, which, in the hands of an anti-Communist press and intelligentsia, was quickly branded as abject pro-Sovietism.

The PCF's choices in the mid-1970s had different, but quite as deleterious, effects on the labour movement. As we have already remarked, the CGT's strategies and tactics in the 1960s had been designed to combine effective, if somewhat conventional, unionism and pro-Communist, pro-Left Unity politicization, including efforts to promote unified action with the increasingly militant CFDT. Economic crisis and a frenetic political situation disequibrated this package. As the crisis made it more and more difficult to mobilize workers on the shopfloor, the political situation—especially the run-up to the critical 1978 elections—tempted both the CGT and CFDT to take refuge in high-level, very general actions to enhance the Left's electoral chances.

Such overpoliticization was in itself very costly, but its effects were dramatically compounded by the divisions between the Left parties in 1977–78. The CGT openly took the PCF's side and the CFDT, less openly, the PS's. Cleaved by partisan divisions, united action between the two unions had become very difficult by late 1978. The situation immeasurably worsened, however, as the PCF pushed its new strategic concerns onto the CGT.⁸⁴ The CFDT became the CGT's analogue to the PS for the PCF—a target for excoriation as irremediably reformist. This decision, plus a parallel flight by the CFDT away from its earlier radical politics, made any further CGT–CFDT united action impossible.⁸⁵ Thus at

⁸³ We have written ethnographically about how this period was lived 'from below' in the Paris party in Jane Jensen and George Ross, *The View From Inside: A French Communist Cell in Crisis*, Berkeley 1985.

⁸⁴ This process was not as easy as we make it sound. The CGT leadership was profoundly divided about following the PCF's lines out of quite correct anticipation of the negative effects it would have on prospects for trade-union action. A difficult internal struggle ensued in which the PCF position ultimately prevailed. See Ross, *Workers and Communists*, Chapter 10 and George Ross, 'The CGT . . .' in Kosselman and Groux, *The French Workers' Movement*.

⁸⁵ We do not here mean to deny that the CFDT was indeed 'reformist' and, at that very moment, shifting rather dramatically away from its earlier radical postures. See Harmon and Rotman, *La Démocratie sociale*, and René Mounaux, 'The CFDT . . .', in Kosselman and Groux, *The French Workers' Movement*.

the very moment when economic crisis was challenging trade unionism everywhere, the imposition of the PCF's politics on the CGT helped divide and, in consequence, weaken the forces of progressive unionism in France. Union membership and mobilizing power, already slipping by 1977-78, declined even more rapidly afterwards, with the CGT suffering the most. The only major union which managed to salvage something was the class-collaborationist *Force Ouvrière*.

The roller-coaster political situation created by the PCF's zigs and zags affected the PS as well. After 1974, when it became clear that the Left might soon come to power and that the PS was gaining more from *Union de la Gauche*, Mitterrand altered the internal majority of the Socialist Party to have maximum possible flexibility, perhaps as Prime Minister after 1978. But then he was caught with this altered majority when the divided Left managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory in March 1978. Having lost two presidential and two legislative elections, Mitterrand could easily be labelled by centrists in the PS as 'archaic' as they challenged his leadership and tried to change the Party's strategy away from *Union de la Gauche* (even in its watered-down *unitaire pour deux guises*). The chosen vehicle for this attempt was Michel Rocard's campaign for nomination as presidential candidate in 1979-80. Mitterrand put down the revolt, but only at the cost of once again changing the PS leadership majority and bringing back CERES to isolate the Rocardians. He thus moved towards his 1981 presidential candidacy with a party whose programme, written by CERES, was considerably to the Left of most of its membership and electorate.⁸⁶ This fact would be of tremendous importance once the Left's initial reformist policy choices ran into difficulty after the election.

Victory From Chaos

Greater governmental recognition that France was facing a new environment emerged after 1976. The political situation nonetheless set severe policy limits. The Left, warts and all, hovered on the edge of becoming a majority from 1974 onwards and the Right, itself increasingly divided over issues of strategy, found itself fighting for its electoral life.⁸⁷ Giscard and Raymond Barre had thus to proceed with great caution. Cutbacks in sectors such as steel and shipbuilding were obligatory and unemployment had to rise because France did not have the wherewithal to do otherwise. Yet the Right's leaders could not go too far in such directions out of fear for the electoral consequences. Inordinately high inflation rates had to be stabilized, yet the government could not risk the political costs of genuine deflation. International trade deficits had to be limited, but not with the neo-conservative vigour which might

⁸⁶ The programme is contained in the *Programme Socialiste*. By comparing this with Mitterrand's election manifesto, *110 Propositions pour la France*, one can trace the lineage.

⁸⁷ It is worth noting here that Gaullism, which long served as a major pole for the Right, had exhausted itself by the mid-1970s. Giscard d'Estaing was not a Gaullist, of course, and clearly staked out his claim for an ideological and political reorganisation of the Right around a Gallic reconstruction of liberalism in *Le Démocrate français* (Paris 1974). As Jacques Chirac took over the Gaullist wing of the majority in the later 1970s, little strategic clarity was achieved. Chirac conveyed the clear impression of being an ideological and strategic improviser and buccannier, willing to use whatever fell to hand without any deeper vision.

otherwise have been indicated. Even after the second oil shock in 1979, the proximity of the 1981 presidential elections dictated a political caution that persistently constrained economic policies.

There turned out to be huge ironies in all this. Having designed their whole economic strategy to manage delicate political problems, Giscard and Barre were to lose politically in 1981. Rising unemployment, higher inflation and gloomy austerity talk increased the Left's appeal despite its own mammoth problems. Moreover, from capital's point of view, the unsatisfactory nature of the regime's policies exacerbated divisions within the majority itself. The living standards of French workers—those employed, to be sure—continued to rise during this period along with spending on social services (a process which implicated employers as well as the state, given the character of the French welfare state). Barre's attempts to control international problems through an overvalued franc heavily penalized French industry's already weak trade positions. In consequence, investment virtually ceased in French industry after 1974.

Such muddling-through set a time bomb ticking for whoever took charge of the economy in 1981. The absence of serious deflationary policies plus administrative controls to keep unemployment levels down meant that capital could not 'purify' itself in ways which would otherwise have been dictated. An overvalued currency artificially cut back the limited export prospects of an industrial base which was already at the outer margins of competitiveness. Thus at the very moment when capital elsewhere was reassessing its postwar strategies, recasting international perspectives, seeking ways to introduce new electronic technologies and discovering the need for new flexibility to increase productivity, French capital was asleep at the switch, and only partly because of its inherent propensities towards somnolence. The result was relative decline.⁸⁸

The election of François Mitterrand in 1981 was as much an artifact of divisions on the Right as of any wave of Left enthusiasm.⁸⁹ Moreover, the Left brought a number of important problems to power with it. Its programme had proven effective as a tool for mobilization and as a source of hope for many, but the specific proposals were neither understood nor supported on a large scale. For the Socialists, who henceforth controlled the playing field, programme had always been more rhetorical currency to undercut the Communists than commitment to policy. The Left did move quickly to implement the major reforms, but its pre-1981 history meant that many of its new policies were more in the nature of slogans than of maturely thought-out approaches to change. Worse still, little thought had been given to the difficulties, especially those caused by the parlous state of the French economy,

⁸⁸ One index of how desperate the situation had become was that virtually *all* of the industrial conglomerates which the Left had pledged to industrialize, a group which included the *fin fleur* of French multinational corporations, were deeply in the red by 1981. For similar reasons French agriculture was also in desperate shape.

⁸⁹ See Alain Lancelot and Marie-Thérèse Lancelot, 'The Evolution of the French Electorate, 1981-86', in Ross et al, *The Mitterrand Experiment*, for a good presentation of the data.

which were certain to ensue as the government tried to carry out these measures. Given that the PS was considerably to the right of its programme, and that the President was much more of a manoeuvrer than a man of deep left principle, the likely trajectories were not difficult to predict.

The PCF and popular mobilization might have stood in the way of debacle. But the 1981 elections demonstrated further the degree to which Mitterrand had succeeded, with invaluable contributions from the PCF, in eroding the Communist vote. Georges Marchais, standing against Mitterrand, received but 15.3 per cent in the first round, beginning a precipitous decline in PCF electoral strength. Much of this shift was due to tactical voting encouraged by the structures of presidentialism, as many habitual PCF voters calculated that support for Mitterrand was the best way to bring Left success. Beyond this, however, the ever more public internal crisis of the PCF took its toll. Fronde-like revolts continued inside the party and more dissidents left or were hounded out, with a hostile media paying very close attention. More quietly, party membership and activist energy dropped sharply.⁹⁰

Alas, in its weakened state the PCF behaved no more coherently in response to Mitterrand's election than it had done in 1977-78. After three years of solid polemics against social democracy, it turned, hat in hand, to sign on to the 'presidential majority' to 'make change succeed'. The four Communist Ministers, some of whom proved to be very good administrators, made only a marginal difference on important issues and none at all when the Socialists and Mitterrand decided to move to austerity, return to the market, 'modernize' and toady up to the Americans. The PCF's position also bound the hands of the CGT against organizing serious labour protest. The weakened PCF had made itself a hostage to Mitterrand and the Socialists, with their absolute parliamentary majority, thereby trading the possibilities of critical voice and action for an illusory inside influence. What had happened to the strategic good sense which had kept the party at the head of the 'ministry of the masses' in the 1930s?

V. Could Things Have Been Different?

The Communist Role

We have consistently argued that the choices of the French Communist Party were central to success or failure of the French Left. French social democracy could not be counted on to work for serious change by itself—apart from anything else, it lacked the militant and revolutionary elements which gravitated towards the PCF. Even if the SFIO and later

⁹⁰ One-third or more of the post-Cold War high of nearly 700,000 members in 1978 had walked away from the party by 1981. Worse still, the rapidly changing international situation—the invasion of Afghanistan, the beginnings of *Solidarnosc* in Poland on one side and the US shift towards the 'new Cold War' on the other—placed the Party in an extremely complex situation. The PCF's official positions on such matters, as of its 23rd Congress in 1979, were interesting, but over subtle. These subtleties were bound to get lost in public debate, especially so when the PCF's presidential candidate chose to appear on television from Moscow to support Soviet policy in Afghanistan.

the PS included truly progressive forces they were minorities in a universe of reformers, technocrats, centrists and politicians whose essential goal was power and the management of capitalism. The political space filled by the PS, then, has always been one of competing factions in which the most progressive elements have never been able to dominate. Without the prodding of a powerful PCF, the PS was unlikely to propose any progressive change at all. Thus the shortcomings of the PCF must assume very great importance in any account of the tragedy of the French Left.

The first, and most essential, failure of the PCF was its inability to comprehend and respond to the character of capital accumulation in modern France. The boom period's economic and social structures fundamentally changed the nature of the French working class—*not a bene, we said changed*, not eliminated or eclipsed—and dramatically altered the size and outlooks of the middle strata. Any alliance between workers and middle strata under the leadership of the working class had to be built under significantly different conditions. In this respect the PCF's insistence, from the 1950s onward, on the most traditional visions of capital accumulation, of definitions of the working class and of middle strata politics became crippling handicaps for the entire Left. Given its strength in the conceptually and programmatically formative years of *Union de la Gauche*, the PCF's perspectives, particularly in the decade or so after 1956, were essential, and they were often blind to changing social realities and organizationally conservative.

The PCF leadership ought to have listened more carefully to the rumblings of the intelligentsia, theoretically in early New Left Marxism, for example, and politically, in the anti-Algerian war mobilization and the pre-1968 student movement.⁹¹ Instead, until the late 1960s the PCF continued to insist that it was engaged in an ideological war of position in which its time-honoured notions of class structure had to prevail over a threatened subordination of the working class to reformist new middle strata. In fact the PCF's, and the Left's, real combat was one of movement rather than position. Equating adaptation to new circumstances with capitulation was not so much a demonstration of revolutionary purity as a recipe for defeat and decline.

When, in the late 1960s, the Party finally became more aware of its problems, it did too little too late. Had many of the doctrinal, theoretical and tactical changes which the PCF worked in the 1970s been started in the 1950s, the outcome would certainly have been very different. But even what little the party did fell short of comprehending the deeper issues. The Second and Third International traditions, even when they talked of 'mass organizations' and 'dual power', usually promoted statism and the encapsulation of rank-and-file mobilization by highly directive formal organizations. There were very good reasons for this. The workings of capital accumulation constantly disorganized and individualized workers. Thus it proved virtually impossible to win even the limited amount of democracy and reform which the situation

⁹¹ It is interesting to note that today one hears PCF leaders acknowledge in private that Roger Garaudy, expelled for his views on working class-middle strata relationships in the late 1960s, was right

allowed without constituting labour movements as congeries of formally bureaucratized organizations. The postwar boom undercut earlier working-class forms of culture and community in work and neighbourhood, and for their own protection and advancement workers had to *delegate* certain powers to organizations and leaderships. The specific combination of Left political culture in France, with its elitist Jacobin proclivities, plus the PCF's Leninist heritage, made such leanings even stronger. Virtually everything, including mass organizational activities for non-political goals, was subordinated in theory and practice to bringing new elites to power who would implement a programme of change, 'given' by the state to society.

The corporatizing social structures accentuated by the postwar boom added a new element of danger to such statist and centralizing organizational and electoralist outlooks. From the point of view of ordinary people faced with a social world of large, distant and manipulative bureaucratic organizations—at work, in state social service organizations, in the schools, the media, or professional associations—parties and unions with state-centric programmes for change did not appear all that different, even if their progressive intentions were more than rhetorical. The problem was magnified by the constant need of Left organizations to calculate complex strategic tradeoffs in dealing with other organizations 'at the top', manoeuvres which were often difficult for ordinary people to understand. In short, the centralizing, 'delegating' and globalizing techniques of mobilization which one found in all areas of the French Left, if usually motivated by good intentions, tended to replicate parallel mechanisms of domination in advanced consumer capitalism.

Here there was little to expect from the PS, to whom Jacobin electoralism was second nature, while the PSU, more sensitive to such questions, was much too small to make a difference. The PCF, on the other hand, understood the primordial necessity of mobilization 'from below'. Alas, its long-standing definition of united frontism, together with its traditional outlooks on such mobilization, were blind spots which rendered French Communism unable to perceive the needs and possibilities of decentralized mobilizational practices focusing on the development of democratic counter-power within institutions and neighbourhoods. Such a perception would have implied new tolerance for movements which had few immediate effects on national state-level political events and for movements which might not, strictly speaking, be controllable by the party. Mobilizations in the intelligentsia as early as the late 1950s ought to have hinted at the need to review classic Leninist approaches, but the PCF's class analysis led it to write off such movements as enemy actions. It reacted less harshly, but in analogous ways, to similar actions which began to arise from the working class in the 1960s.

With the coming of economic crisis in the 1970s the problematic nature of such traditional and limiting responses became clearer. Capital itself began to turn away from corporatized collaboration towards 'flexible' decentralization. This, plus changes in France's social geography connected with modifications in the class structure, deindustrialization, and the effects of the PCF's own strategic mistakes, rapidly began to undercut

the PCF's long-standing sources of organizational strength in the CGT and 'red-belt' working-class suburbs. In this context the PCF finally did begin to talk about *autogestion* and new mobilizational approaches. But, once again, the party's adaptive response was too little too late. As of the later 1980s, a decade after the theme of *autogestion* appeared in Communist analyses, it still was unclear whether the Party understood and meant what it said.

The final general problem was strategic. The PS, as a composite, had one goal, winning power and . . . *on verra après*! While there might have been elements within the PS which thought and acted differently, the logic of the majority and the leadership was that power was essential, programme decidedly secondary. Behind this, of course, were certain principles structured deeply in the 'texts' which Socialists uttered. It would be nice to change things, provided that it turned out to be easy and costless to do so. If neither of these conditions prevailed, however, it was probably because the 'real world' was unchangeable and capitalism would persist in some form.

Once again, it was really up to the PCF to promote a setting which might alter, or at least unsettle, these deeper PS principles, such that recourse to them at the first moments of adversity would not be easy. The PCF knew that a repetition of 1917 was not on. It replaced 1917, alas, with a formalized version of 1936, forgetting somehow that if 1936 had been an important moment of reform, it had neither contained revolutionary elements nor created a situation which fostered them. Moreover, in 1936, by withholding participation from the Popular Front government and pledging to be the 'ministry of the masses', the PCF had at least left a threat to chance: If things did not work out it might call out the popular troops. But 1960s and 1970s united frontism downplayed even this possibility. The PCF genuinely believed that it could deploy organizational and electoral resources to manoeuvre reluctant allies into an irreversible process of change which would be legislated by the state. This belief was patently naive, and in the context of Fifth Republic presidentialism it was also highly dangerous for the PCF's own integrity.

The real issue went deeper. If one set aside the 1917 scenario and the subsequent Soviet model as unworkable (and probably undesirable) and one was sceptical of a strategy like the PCF's top-down united frontism as, at best, solidly reformist, there were not many obvious *stratégies de reshaping*. That united frontism nourished by a redrawn class map and rearméd by innovative mobilizational approaches would have opened the way to a transcendence of capitalism is doubtful. But prospects for serious reforms and an enhancement of PCF power and credibility would have been increased. The consistent pursuit of such a strategy from the 1950s onwards might have done enough to revive the potential for social alliances, to change new middle strata outlooks, to help create a PS with different strategic propensities and to endow the PCF itself with more strength and staying power. All these things, in turn, *might* have allowed the French Left after 1981 to democratize the economy and French society and helped to democratize the international setting.

Along with many in the PCF itself, one might also have envisaged a different strategic alternative, militant autonomy. If it had also been developed around innovative theory, class mapping and decentralized democratic mobilization, it might conceivably have led to more positive outcomes. The PCF has now made at least a verbal commitment to this second strategic perspective. Unfortunately it arrived at this position only at great cost to the party's internal vitality, after an historic opportunity had already been lost. One must be sympathetic intellectually to efforts to find new *antogestionnaires* and democratic approaches to change, accompanied by frank recognition of many of the profound mistakes made earlier. The PCF's new outlook, however, is at present no more than an embryonic approach to the transition to socialism, presented by a greatly weakened, profoundly divided and demoralized party. Worse still, the PCF has not moved towards solving the problem which, more than any other, explains its earlier incapacity to respond to the world around it—the lack of democracy inside the party. Bureaucratized, undemocratic centralism has been a catastrophe which successive generations of party leaders have persistently refused to recognize. Beyond this the PCF, given its origins and traditions, has been unable to adjust to what must be the largest general change in the environment of the revolutionary Left of the past half-century, the eclipse of the Soviet model.

The Reconstruction of French Socialism

Despite all these general constraints, some space did exist between 1981 and 1986, and it was squandered. For this the Socialists must be held responsible. The Left held solid governmental power for the medium term plus considerable good will at the outset, nourished by France's republican and revolutionary traditions. However great its difficulties, the French economy retained some resiliency. And while the effects of the PCF's longer-run tragedy considerably narrowed the margins for manoeuvre politically, the PS's failure to maximize what did exist was worse than lamentable.

A devaluation in 1981 might very well have bought the French economy, and reformism, much greater space by creating options for careful and quiet trade protection to maintain employment, the domestic market and living standards. The example of Sweden after 1982 is telling. Next, democratizing the economy in a more innovative way than the timid Auroux Laws did—something more like West German *Mitbestimmung*, for example—was quite conceivable and might well have generated some of the popular enthusiasm which ultimately was so lacking. In general, there was a different path to be followed between the Socialists' statist fear of popular mobilization and utopian spontaneism, one which used state power to generate a dialectic of popular support through reforms to narrow the space and options of capital. The path which the Socialists chose instead broadened this space and these options. Finally, there was no structural reason at all why Mitterrand had to be the most pro-American President in the history of Fifth Republic France.

Rather than reflecting on these matters in search of a new progressive course, after the Left's electoral defeat of March 1986 François Mitter-

rand and the Socialists intensified the political conversion which they had begun in the earlier 1980s. By 1986 the collapse of the PCF had released Mitterrand from the need to calculate within the terms of *Union de la Gauche*. Left forces were delegitimized within the PS, or they calculated the advantages of strategic modifications for themselves, leaving Mitterrand a free hand. Then, using all of his considerable gifts as tactician plus the resources granted him by the institution of the presidency itself, Mitterrand outmanoeuvred a divided French Right to engineer his own re-election to the Presidency in spring 1988, winning 54 per cent in the runoff against Jacques Chirac's 46 per cent.⁹² The parliamentary elections in June 1988 confirmed the Right's fissiparous decline and brought the Socialists back to governmental power.⁹³ The number of PS legislative seats fell short of the 289 needed for an absolute majority and obliged Michel Rocard's government to manoeuvre for majorities issue by issue. Nevertheless, the willingness of Communist deputies to vote for certain programmes and of Centrist deputies to vote for others, plus necessary governmental prudence in the posing of issues, guaranteed a certain lease of life.⁹⁴

Thus in two brief years Mitterrand and the Socialists managed to turn what looked to be an historic defeat into victory, but within the workings of a much deeper logic. After 1983 the Socialists, facing a menacing international economy, severe domestic economic difficulties and a dramatic collapse of electoral support, had begun a cultural revolution cutting their ties to a Left past.⁹⁵ Class analyses of the social world and proposals for redistributing wealth and power to transcend capitalism were replaced by a new technocratic modernism. The PS's stock-in-trade became an allegedly superior management competence—'with a human face', to be sure—to restructure the French economy in the international market. The PS's old project, at least rhetorically, had a conflictual dynamic—the Left would propose a project of basic change and win over a majority to its implementation, isolating capital and the Right. The new project, in contrast, sought to isolate the 'extreme' Left and Right—i.e. the PCF and the Gaullists—and to govern from the

⁹² See *Le Monde, Dossiers et documents, l'élection présidentielle du 27 avril-8 mai 1988* (Paris 1988). There were a number of reasons for the Right's difficulties. Its economic policies failed to restore healthy rates of growth and employment. Its approach to the public was confusing as well. There was consistent cacophony: hard-line neo-liberalism, old-fashioned Gaullist corporatism, tough law-and-order talk pandering to racism and conservative Christian Democratic paternalism alternated and overlapped with an *affairiste* elitism particularly evident in Edouard Balladur's privatization campaign. Perhaps the central issue which emerged, undoubtedly prompted by such evident differences of perspective within the Centre-Right majority, was the personality of the Prime Minister, neo-Gaullist leader and Right presidential candidate, Jacques Chirac, whose volatility and lack of longer-term perspectives became notorious. The most interesting review of this brief historical moment is to be found in Philippe Bouchard, *La Crise sous l'empire d'un choc fort*, Paris 1988.

⁹³ The Socialists converted slightly less than 40 per cent of the vote in the first round of the elections into 276 of 577 seats in the National Assembly, a multiplication due to the workings of the new-old electoral law. For electoral details and commentaries see *Le Monde, dossiers et documents, les élections législatives du 5 et 12 juin 1988* (Paris 1988).

⁹⁴ The elections provided other important indications: Jean-Marie Le Pen won nearly 15 per cent in the presidentials yet the *Front National* was virtually destroyed (one seat, down from 32) in the legislatives.

⁹⁵ Daniel Singer's *Is Socialism Dead?* (New York 1988) is particularly good in tracing the evolution of this conversion experience prior to 1986.

Centre with an eventual 'opening' to Christian Democrat and moderate liberal elements from the existing Centre-Right coalition.

A number of social and political circumstances made this a promising political project by 1988. Since it de-emphasized class and class conflict and sought to build a centrist consensus, it was obviously contingent on the relative decline of the Communist Party, a militant union movement and a serious Left intelligentsia. The project also counted upon weakness and division on the French Right—a condition which, though slower to emerge, was clearly ripening by 1988. The renaissance of racism in France became a powerfully divisive force: parts of the formerly hegemonic Right-Centre coalition responded with cooptative law and order politics, while other parts—especially the Christian Democrat and social liberal groups which interested the Socialists—recoiled in loathing both from the new racism and from such responses. Superimposed on these divisions were disagreements over economic strategy. The *dirigiste* and statist approaches to economic modernization which had been the glory of Gaullism and the cement of the Gaullist coalition were progressively discarded by the Centre-Right in the 1970s. New strategies were never really agreed, however, and instead the Centre-Right broke down into warring clans. On the Right by the 1980s there were advocates of neo-Gaullist (i.e. Pompidolian and Chiracian) elite clientelism, younger Reaganite-Thatcherite neo-liberals and cautious centrist economic managers of the Raymond Barre type. One explanation for this, of course, is that the political forces which had come to represent capital during most of the Fifth Republic were refracting the confusion of different fractions of capital about the new economic circumstances. Finally, the long tenure in power, from 1958 through 1981, meant that parts of public opinion quite properly assigned major responsibility for the crisis and, more importantly, for the lack of innovative responses, to the Centre-Right. The failure of the Left responses after 1981 gave the Centre-Right a new lease on life in 1986, but the discordant vocabularies of the new majority between 1986 and 1988 and its relative lack of success confirmed earlier public intuitions.

A New Elite Politics

The new Socialist project also involved the primacy of a new armamentarium of political techniques. The Left projects of the 1960s and 1970s were premised upon traditional models of mobilization. To be sure, what ultimately counted was political success, votes and election victories. But conceptions about how to achieve such things involved issues of class and cross-class alliance and mobilization around class struggles, ideally through class-based membership organizations like unions and parties whose activities would touch and penetrate different aspects of the lives of ordinary people. The new politics abandoned the vocabularies of class, replacing them with an elite politics of the 'good technocrat', sophisticated opinion polling techniques, 'professional' uses of television, public relations technologies and emphasis on personalities, all approaches which were encouraged by the presidentialization of French politics. The 1988 presidential campaign illustrated the workings of these techniques exceptionally well. Mitterrand managed to focus a great deal of attention on his *persona*, remanufacturing it to project an

image of sage tranquillity, the *vieux Tonion* who had seen and understood all and whose experience would guide a troubled France towards new and safer harbours. The vagueness of Mitterrand's presentation, which centred on platitudes about president-government relations, the French welfare state, and France's destiny in Europe, was quite remarkable. Beyond pious sentiments, the message was that the others, Mitterrand's opponents, were unstable, changeable, without firm ideas, and desirous of perpetuating the partisan wars which the French manifestly wanted to end. In the legislative elections which followed Mitterrand's success, Socialist candidates were marketed much more as supporters of the President than as the bearers of a specific programme.

Neither political principle nor serious change was what mattered for Mitterrand and most of the PS in 1988. The point of the exercise was rather to fish for votes in the most 'modern' of ways, targeting key swing constituencies with subtle appeals of one sort or another, worrying less about 'captive' constituencies and playing down, within limits, specific projects such that expectations would not be unduly raised. The purpose of the whole operation was to instal Socialist elites in power, partly to manage real problems successfully and partly to stay in power.

French Socialism, which for a variety of reasons had never been fully 'social democratic' prior to the 1980s, became even less so as a result of its modern conversion experience. Instead it developed a *new* form of left-of-centre politics which had every chance of medium-term survival in France and whose resemblance to 'modernized' parties—Felipe González's PSOE, for example, Craxi's Italian Socialists, or even Michael Dukakis's Democratic Party—portended an important future. As of 1988 it had already accomplished the defeat of neo-conservatism in France, in itself no mean accomplishment. It also promises, although results remain to be seen, a genuinely more subtle and decentralized, sometimes empowering, management of French society, economy and state, remedying thereby some of the glaring defects both of French Jacobinism and of the centralizing and uniformizing reformism of traditional social democracy. Few would confuse such virtues, however, with a genuinely *Left* approach.

There was one surprising outcome of the June 1988 French legislative elections—a slight upward trend in electoral support for the PCF (the party's vote rose beyond 12 per cent, in contrast to below 10 per cent in the 1986 legislative poll and 7.8 per cent in the presidential elections). The meaning of this was clear. The Socialists' bid for new hegemony involved 'recentering' their appeal. This, in turn, could grant forces to their Left, including the PCF, new space to regroup. Thus if the PCF and CGT, together with other remaining forces on the Left, prove able to recast their analyses and mobilizational approaches and thereby reinvent a genuine class politics appropriate to the new setting, prospects for success could be great. Minority tendencies within the PS resisting the party's new politics could also be strengthened.

For this to happen, of course, the PCF would have to overcome its longstanding problems. At the time of writing, the likelihood of such renewal was not out of the question, albeit quite remote. At its 26th

Congress in 1987, the PCF presented a militantly defensive posture and backed away from earlier efforts to devise a new mobilizational calculus premised upon modernist and *autogestionnaire* criteria for management. The Party seemed to have concluded that the best it could do, in difficult circumstances, was to harvest the new crop of *mécontents* which Socialist politics and the crisis were producing, and in particular to win away protest voters from the racist *Front National*. This far-from-foolish line runs up against the outer limits of the Party's inability to envisage positive political outcomes. Moreover, an aura of 'Brezhnevism', which the Soviets themselves had begun to criticize, hung like a pall over the PCF's internal life. The top leadership was ageing and unimaginative, and the younger leaders waiting for the succession obediently reproduced the unimaginative outlooks of their superiors. Virtually everyone in the apparatus seemed more obsessed with beating back opposition from various dissatisfied insiders—renovators, reconstructors and other rebels upset about the party's lack of dynamism and decline—than with moving forward. It should not be forgotten, however, that Gorbachev and perestroika issued from the Brezhnev years of conservative decay.

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Identity, Negation and Violence

I.

As something to be talked and written about, as a phenomenon with nearly hysterical descriptions and pronouncements routinely added to its name as a mobilizing theme for politicians, armies, navies and air forces, 'terrorism' has now lost a good deal of its power. A mere matter of months ago thousands of Americans cancelled trips to Europe because they feared the terrorist threat; in April 1986 the United States raided Libya during the prime time TV news in order, it was said, to deal with the terrorist threat posed by Libya (on a pretext—the bombing of a West Berlin disco—which has since proved *not* to be Libya's doing). All during the period from 1983 through 1985 and 1986, 'terrorism' claimed public attention on a scale hitherto unknown. At the behest of the US administration—amplified by dutiful, unreflecting media—numerous governments made pronouncements about, and any number of moves against, terrorism, so much so

that during this period the Secretary of State elevated terrorism to the status of 'number one' foreign policy problem for the United States and, he went on to suggest imprudently, for the world.

As a result, even though attention to terrorism has quite noticeably diminished, the word still comes easily, trippingly to the tongue. Now, it would be disingenuous at this point for me *not* to connect terrorism as a word and concept with perhaps one reason for my examining of the subject in these reflections. The reason, of course, is that mainly in the United States, but also generally speaking in the West, terrorism is by now permanently, and subliminally associated in the first instance with Islam, a notion no less overused and vague than terrorism itself. In the minds of the unprepared or the unalert, Islam calls up images of bearded clerics and mad suicidal bombers, of unrelenting Iranian mullahs, fanatical fundamentalists, and kidnappers, remorseless turbaned crowds who chant hatred of the US, 'the great devil', and all its ways. And behind the wave of 'Islamic' images battering the US's unprotected shores stand the string of Palestinian terrorists—hijackers, masked killers of airport crowds, athletes, schoolchildren, handicapped and elderly innocents—who in the unexamined popular mythology of our day are presumed to have begun the whole shameful and frightful thing. Since I am known as having associations both ethnic and national with Palestine and with Islam, I am therefore presentable before audiences as someone who, when it comes to terrorism, really knows (in the invidious sense of the word) what he's talking about.

The Need for Explanation

I will not waste the reader's time by saying more about this deplorable concatenation of assumptions, other than quickly to allude to that combination of discomfort and resentment which remains with me from the moment I begin to take on the subject. Nevertheless, it has seemed to be also true that despite the tremendous damage caused by 'terrorism' itself and representations or reactions to it, there are some reflections that can be made about both, reflections whose articulation is made possible by the abatement in organized public hysteria I spoke of a moment ago. Precisely that abatement will, I think, enable us to reconnect representations of 'terrorism' to contexts, structures, histories and narratives from which, during the word's period of greatest prominence, its representations appeared to be severed.

For the most striking thing about 'terrorism', as a phenomenon of the public sphere of communication and representation in the West, is its isolation from any explanation or mitigating circumstances, and its isolation as well from representations of most other dysfunctions, symptoms and maladies of the contemporary world. Indeed, in many discussions there is often a ritual of dismissing as irrelevant, soft-headed or in other ways suspicious, anything that might explain the actions of terrorism: 'Let's not hear anything about root causes,' runs the righteous litany, 'or deprivation, or poverty and political frustration, since all terrorists can be explained away if one has a mind to it. What *we* should be after is an understanding of terrorism that helps us defeat it, not an explanation that might make us feel sorry for the terrorist.' Thus

terrorism was stripped of any right to be considered as other historical and social phenomena are considered, as something created by human beings in the world of human history. Instead the isolation of terrorism from history and from other things in Vico's world of the nations has had the effect of magnifying its ravages, even as terrorism itself has been shrunk from the public world into a small private world reserved tautologically for the terrorists who commit terrorism, and for the experts who study them.

No less strange was the common agreement in expert literature and rhetoric that no real definition of terrorism was actually possible. It is true, of course, that writers like Clare Sterling and Benjamin Netanyahu felt no compunction about defining terrorism as whatever seemed inimical to the West, Israel, the Judeo-Christian tradition and Goodness, but it would be wrong and misleading to accuse all writers on terrorism of such robust self-confidence. Many are like Walter Laqueur, one of the most respectable academic specialists who began work on the subject well before the recent vogue. Laqueur frankly admits that 'no definition of terrorism can possibly cover all the varieties of terrorism that have appeared throughout history; peasant wars and labour disputes and brigandage have been accompanied by systematic terror, and the same is true with regard to general wars, wars of national liberation and resistance movements against foreign occupiers.' Later he tries somehow to rescue his topic from this welter of ubiquity, valiantly suggesting that even though terrorism resists definition it can be discussed in the context of movements that have used 'systematic terrorism as their main weapon'. But when he asserts that that practice begins in the second half of the nineteenth century (*Terrorism*, New York 1977, p. 11) we will, I think, have lost faith not only in his philosophical acuity for trying to describe something that he says cannot adequately be described, but also in his historical sense for studiously ignoring the revolutionary Terror of France some seventy-five years earlier.

It is less on Laqueur's own failings than on terrorism as an apparently isolated but identifiable disturbance that I wish to concentrate. In fact the appearance of isolation has almost always been misleading. For terrorism has regularly appeared in contemporary conjunction with, among other stigmatized groups, Islam, Palestinians, Iran and Shiism—that is, objects, concepts, peoples and cultures poorly and antithetically known, and therefore more liable to technical, metaphysical, and ultimately ideological constructions. There is first the powerful aura of the exotic, and even the literary, that surrounds terrorism. Its literary roots are Eastern, and if one thinks of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* or Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, the Assassins and Thuggees, there is in addition the *lunche*, the gratuitous, the senselessly cruel that adheres to it. Moreover, the terror of terrorism appears indiscriminate and generalized: no one is safe from it, none insulated, none immune. Facts and figures are not easy to get hold of, although the hint of vast numbers of casualties is always there, from the random explosive set off in a market place to the nuclear device that just might kill uncounted thousands. Rarely does one hear the tonic reminders of the disparity in violence between individual terrorists and conventional armies, given

by Gillo Pontecorvo to Larbi Ben M'Hidi in *The Battle of Algiers*, 'Give us your bombs and you can have our women's baskets.'

These techniques of decontextualization and dehistoricization are not new and have occurred elsewhere in colonial or post-colonial situations. Irish resistance to British rule, for instance, was routinely classed as terrorist by British writers who then built on the classification a theory of retributive response that quite ignored historical specificity, proportion or concrete analysis. Thus Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in 'Confessions of a Unionist' (1888) that so unsuccessful had British policy been in Ireland ('Through sentimentality, through the craven vagaries of a popular assembly, we have suffered the law to tumble in the muck') that 'Irish lawlessness' had triumphed, along with the 'Irish appeal to violence'. Therefore he advocated no change in British colonial abuses 'until the whole machinery of terrorism is destroyed', and this by a wholesale brutality meted out by 'vigilance committees'. Any other policy would be succumbing to 'maudlin sentimentality'. Curiously enough Stevenson's editor in 1988, Jeremy Treglown, does not flinch from Stevenson's 'call for an end to terrorism in Ireland', only from his inability to say 'how the extirpation of violence is to be brought about in practice'. Thus does the inebriately self-justifying revulsion provoked by the word leap across the years with little regard for context or power. Similar rhetorical flights were routinely in evidence when Cypriot or Mau Mau 'terrorists' were discussed in the post-war years.

Terrorism and the Islamic World

But the issue that chiefly concerns me here is terrorism as it engages public awareness of the Middle East and of the Arab-Islamic world in particular. The presence of this region and its people in discussions of terrorism is, I believe, quite unique. To my knowledge, of no other country, no religion, culture or ethnic group except Islam and its societies, has it been said that terrorism is, after a fashion, endemic. This is argued by several of the Orientalists who contribute to perhaps the most visible and influential of the popular anti-terrorist manuals, the collection edited by Benjamin Netanyahu, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*. By the nature of the argument, evidence is problematic, but it is bandied about anyway, with curious results. All sorts of strange objects appear—for example, the Islamic mind, ancient feuds, remarkable but unnameable proclivities to wanton violence—all of them attesting to essential traits that supposedly have been there eternally and are susceptible neither to historical change nor to any sort of amelioration.

Since 'terrorism' is indefinable and entirely negative, these arguments for its connection with Islam and/or Palestinians have rarely been opposed. The point is that there is hardly any way, there are few enunciative opportunities, to oppose such arguments about terrorism without also seeming to be *for it*. Unanimity is intimidating, particularly on this scale, but during the full-scale terrorist alert—for example, during the 1986 bombing of Libya or the 1985 TWA hijacking—you could not deny the Islamic ingredient, you could not present supervening arguments, you could not prevent the guilty associations from

spreading, without also appearing in some way to explain, hence condone, the outrage. The framework was entirely hostile to anyone who did not accept the perfect equivalence between the State which seemed to be attacked, and injured innocence; indeed, very little inhibits the framework from expanding to include, on the part of the United States, the Western heritage, morality and outraged virtue.

Perhaps the most sensible intervention in the verbal dust-storm has been Eqbal Ahmad's, which appeared in the May-June 1986 issue of *MERIP Reports*. Ahmad's premise is that terrorism—'acts of intimidating and injuring unarmed, presumably innocent civilians', acts for which there are five sources, 'state, religion, protest/revolution, crime and pathology', of which 'only the first three have political motivation'—does exist and is a source of genuine concern, but needs analysis and discrimination if we wish to do 'justice to its victims, or to understanding' on both sides of 'the ideological boundary'. Ahmad offers a set of half-a-dozen guidelines for analysis. These are: terrorism is connected to 'the need to be heard', since it 'is a violent way of expressing long-felt, collective grievances. When legal and political means fail over a long period a minority of the aggrieved community elicits the sympathy of the majority with violent acts.' Moreover, Ahmad continues, 'anger and helplessness produce compulsions towards retributive violence'—a factor that explains the violence not only of the helpless but also of the powerful: 'I have pounded a few walls myself when I am alone', said President Reagan in 1985. Then we should acknowledge the sad truth that 'the experience of violence at the hands of a stronger party has historically turned victims into terrorists.' Similarly, 'when identifiable targets become available, violence is externalized'—that is, people pass from the stage of pounding walls to shooting what stands before them.

Ahmad's last two points are the most complex, and have to do with a subtle interplay between the technology of weapons and of the media on the one hand, and political ideology on the other. Examples of massive and senseless violence enable the spread of terrorism. Thus the Indochinese war, history's most visible superpower intervention, conducted at a high level of organization, effectiveness and cruelty, showed the way governments can plan violence against civilian populations; the emulations of this violence by poorly organized and goalless small groups are also attempts to imitate the legitimization asserted by states who use violence to gain dubious and unclear ends. Finally Ahmad suggests that the more detailed, territorially grounded and concrete the ideological goal as set forth by insurgent and revolutionary groups (e.g. the Vietnamese, Algerian, Cuban, Angolan and Nicaraguan uprisings) the less likely the possibility of spectacular and intimidating violence. 'Revolutionary violence tends to be sociologically and psychologically selective. It strikes at widely perceived symbols of oppression—landlords, rapacious officials, repressive armies. It aims at widening the revolutionaries' popular support by freeing their potential constituencies from the constraints of oppressive power.' To dispersed or homeless peoples the appeal of terror is the ease and instantaneity of transportation, whose symbols are the airplane and airport, of coercion, whose instrument is the small lethal hand weapon, and of communication,

whose mode is the electronic media, which offer an immediate means of directing a message. Thus have the invisible and terror-filled wars waged by states been challenged by the frightening visibility of unpredictable acts of violence by small bands of adventurers.

What further distinguishes Ahmad's contribution to the enormous literature, the widely diffused imagery, the much-marketed expertise on terrorism is something left implicit in his remarks: the role of the interested observer. He writes from the perspective of a militant whose support of anti-imperialist struggles has not, however, stilled his *critical* sense. So much of the current discussion and representation of terrorism simply *assumes* the disinterestedness, detachment and objectivity of the author. Yet it is a truism of contemporary interpretative theory that no such position can or ever did exist. Thus, to take as an example a social discourse based on the construction of an observer who articulates the discourse, *anthropology* presumes to offer scientific material about 'Others' afforded to ethnographic experts, whose power to observe, live among, participate in the lives of foreign societies is premised on the power of *their* constituencies to travel abroad, do anthropology, etc. Similarly, with few exceptions the discourse of terrorism is constituted by an author whose main client is the government of a powerful state opposed to terrorism, but also anxious to shield itself from arguments about perceptions of its own (quite routinely barbaric and violent) behaviour. Why this is so should be obvious, since the disproportion between state violence and (so-to-speak) private violence is, and always has been, vast.

Nowhere is this paradigmatic rhetorical combination of client-appeal and blockage more clear than in the work of political scientists in Israel and the USA, states whose recent foreign policy has been staked on the fight against terrorism, a political decision arrived at consciously and therefore ideologically as a method for dealing with resistance to US-Israeli power; in addition this decision made it possible for the government-sponsored outpouring against terrorism either to screen or to legitimize the governmental violence of both countries.

Campaigns of Disinformation

Consider Israel, which in many ways has pioneered the notion that democracies, because they are democracies, are especially liable to gratuitous terrorism. According to the respected Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk, writing in *Le Monde Diplomatique* in February 1986, Israeli policy-makers began in the mid-1970s the discipline of describing as terrorism everything done by Palestinians to combat Israeli military occupation; the decision coincided with the growing international prestige and legitimacy of the Palestinian national movement. In this decision, of course, Israel was following the path taken by other regimes of colonial occupation (the French in Algeria, the Americans in Vietnam, the South African government in its description of the ANC and its resistance). By the summer of 1982 this campaign of indiscriminate disinformation led to some of the tactics of Operation Peace for Galilee, where what was a massive war against a sovereign country and a national liberation movement could be described as a campaign against terrorism. The distinction of the Israeli informational manipulation of

the word 'terrorism' was that it was done more or less in conjunction with the most powerful media apparatus available—no other sub-imperial power in history could avail itself of so formidable an imperial system as the American. The result was that more or less anything that disturbed the peace and was ostensibly done by someone of whom Western civilization was thought to disapprove, was called a terrorist outrage.

Until the television screen was suddenly filled with images of Israel's siege and devastation of Beirut and South Lebanon during the summer of 1982, 'terrorism' was supposed by most journalists and audiences to be an almost Platonic essence inherent in all Palestinians and Muslims, without historical, social or political circumstances or conditions. Even more important, however, the discourse of 'terrorism', counter-terrorism, terrorist expertise obliterated all the historical processes that might conceivably have produced so many terrorists and so many acts of terror. In the case of Israel, the Palestinian argument had posited the existence of a society and of a people, of a nation in short, whose continuity had been shattered in 1948, and whose subsequent travail was, in the main instance, the result of a continuous war against the Palestinian people by Israel which to the Palestinians proclaimed itself to be conducting a war that made no distinctions between civilians or armed combatants, between refugee camps, hospitals, schools, orphanages, and what the Israeli military command regularly referred to as terrorist nests. Readers will appreciate that I speak here as an engaged Palestinian and not as a political scientist, and they will, I trust, grant me the right to say that despite the wall-to-wall coverage of the Palestinian struggle as an extended terrorist assault upon Israel, the record is a dreadful one, in the loss of thousands of Palestinian lives, of homes destroyed, of literally uncountable human catastrophes suffered by this nation of Palestinian terrorists. I do not need to say here how the recent mass insurrections and sacrifices of unarmed Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank testify dramatically to, on the one hand, an entire history of iron-fisted, anti-terrorist Israeli policy of repression, and, on the other hand, the vacant political message, equally anti-terrorist, delivered to them by the Israeli government which has acknowledged only a conflict between terrorism and democracy.

Gradually the *intifadab*, or uprising, in the Occupied Territories has increased in intensity, has further laughed out of court the notion that Palestinian resistance equals terrorism, has irreversibly transformed the shadowy status of Palestinian nationalism into proto-statehood, and Israeli policy into a dying colonialism. But what has been revealed to Palestinians by the *intifadab* is the true political mass basis for all national liberation movements, in which neither the uninstructed gun alone nor the random (if understandable) outrage has anything like the moral and mobilizable force of coordinated, intelligent courageous human action. When one of the uprising's leaders in Gaza was asked by a journalist how unarmed children, men and women so routinely defied Israeli troops, the answer testified elegantly to how a popular movement had in fact banished terror. 'Fear,' he said, 'has been forbidden.' And that was that.

But I also want to say that in the specific case of 'talking terrorism' in the Middle East, distinctions and connections have simply not been made enough. There *has been* terrorism, there has been cruel, insensate, shameful violence, yes, but who today can stand before us and say that violence is all, or even mainly, on the side of the labelled 'terrorists', and virtue on the side of civilized states who in many ways do in fact represent decency, democracy, and a modicum of 'the good'? I must therefore confess that I find the entire arsenal of words and phrases that derive from the concept of terrorism both inadequate and shameful. There are few ways of talking about terrorism now that are not corrupted by the propaganda war even of the past decade, ways that have become, in my opinion, disqualified as instruments for conducting rational, secular inquiry into the causes of human violence. Is there some other way of apprehending what might additionally be involved when we now unthinkingly use the word 'terrorism'? Is there a style of thought and language that pretends neither to get past the word's embroiled semantic history, nor to restore it, cleansed and sparkling new, for further polemical use?

II.

Throwing up unfamiliar, or at least newer settings in which to set the unpleasant tingling induced by the word 'terrorism' is a worthwhile alternative to simply attacking habitual uses of the word. The very totalism, the radical and impermeable oppositions that set off the word from its use by the enemies of terrorism furnish a beginning. We normally encounter the word not when used by terrorists to describe what they do, but rather to identify and fix a particularly pernicious assault upon humanity, like Conrad's throwing 'a bomb into pure mathematics' in *The Secret Agent*. But things are rarely left to indirection and suggestion. Contemporary 'terrorism' is identified with terrorists, who, as I have been saying, are most often 'our' enemies, Muslim, Palestinian, etc. Similarly 'we' are the West, moral, collectively incapable of such inhuman behaviour, etc.

What I want to draw attention to here, on both sides of the absolute line separating terrorism from its opponents, is that there is assumed to be a perfect correspondence between terrorism, terrorists, and Islam or Palestine, if the terrorists are Palestinian Muslims, just as on the better side of the contest, 'we' completely embody morality, the West, and so forth. In other words there is a process by which various identities in alignment end up by fusing completely with each other: the terrorist with Islam, communism, and whatever other undesirable identities we wish to foist on him, the opponent with all the desirable qualities which, one assumes, fit around 'us' like a perfect body stocking.

Even when the analyst of terrorism tries to take a 'middle path' the compacting of identities proceeds apace. I have in mind the rather ambitious book by Beau Grosscup entitled *The Explosion of Terrorism*, in which the author tries quite intelligently to separate out the ideological hype and flat-out exaggeration that flaws most of the writing on the subject. His approach, which he calls a middle way between polemic and apologetics, is historical and situational, but he too is obliged to

incorporate cultures, peoples, traditions and regions of the world, with more or less complete congruence, to the practice, if not the essence, of terrorism. To some degree this is an exigency of writing and exposition—how, for instance, can you talk about people who describe themselves as Iranian fighters without somehow associating Iran as a whole with their style of fighting?—but to some degree also the difficulty stems from the modern habit of connecting people with their identities as members of a national group.

There is no other way. So deeply ingrained is the tendency to funnel society into the mould prepared for it by the nation-state, that we cannot conceive of societies except as thoroughly congruent with the state, as if the teleology of all social entities was the state. To some extent, of course, this is an understandable tendency for thought in an age so dominated by nationalism, the nation-state, and various statist ideologies. Any reader of the vast literature on modern nationalism, especially some of its better works like Hugh Seton-Watson's *Nations and States* or Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, will testify to the compelling logic of statism, and to the manifest difficulty of escaping its premises, or of thinking outside its limits. This is one among many reasons for admiring the efforts made by Pierre Clastres in *Society Against the State* to criticize the biases that have infiltrated most of our thinking about society. But he is a singular exception to the rule pervading most political discourse.

Terrorism in short must be directly connected to the very processes of identity in modern society, from nationalism, to statism, to cultural and ethnic affirmation, to the whole array of political, rhetorical, educational and governmental devices that go into consolidating one or another identity. One belongs either to one group or to another; one is either in or out; one acts principally in support of a triumphalist identity or to protect an endangered one. Very often 'terrorists' end up reproducing the very structures that have 'alienated' them (Sendero Luminoso, the Abu Nidal group, etc.). The interplay of identity and alienation is therefore total, and it can be observed in a brilliant epitomization in one of the daring mytho-poetical archeologies offered by Vico speculatively in an early section of *The New Science*. Vico speaks here of the origins of authority in 'the world of the nations', and tries to explain the prevalence everywhere of matrimony and religion as the two fundamental components of the modern state. The passage deserves quotation in full because Vico quite amazingly and presciently stakes social order and identity upon the confinement of disorderly energies by the fearful terror of Jove's power:

Authority was at first divine; the authority by which divinity appropriated itself the few giants [these are Vico's first human beings] we have spoken of, by properly casting them into the depths and recesses of the caves under the mountains. This is the iron ring by which the giants, dispersed upon the mountains, were kept chained to the earth by fear of the sky and of Jove, wherever they happened to be when the sky first thundered. Such were Tityus and Prometheus, chained to a high rock with their hearts being devoured by an eagle; that is by the religion of Jove's auspices. Their being rendered immobile by fear was expressed by the

Latins in the heroic phrase *terrore defixi*, and the artists depict them chained hand and foot with such links upon the mountains. Of these links was formed the great chain of which . . . Jove, to prove that he is king of men and gods, asserts that if all the gods and men were to take hold of one end, he alone would be able to drag them all. . . . Hence it was that the giants gave up the bestial custom of wandering through the great forest of the earth and habituated themselves to the quite contrary custom of remaining settled and hidden for a long period in their caves (paras. 387-8).

Vico is trying first to describe the birth of divine authority, then in the section about the giants' settling down, of human authority. According to the Sophists, he says, this is the way the world is 'girdled and bound'. Tityus and Prometheus seem to be models for heroic individuals who have gone too far in living beyond the strictures laid down by Jove; therefore they must be visibly punished and permanently fixed in place, their hearts eaten out. Most other human beings, however, are prepared to accept the places offered them as domestic beings—hence matrimony and religion—by Jove. These early peoples come to inhabit caves, and later houses, but the important thing is that they cease wandering around. Jove's terror is used to tame human terror, to fix it in social, and subsequently in national pigeon-holes, although Vico does not minimize either the heroic or the transgressive terror of Jove, whose imposing gifts for authority and punishment directly antecede the modern state's monopoly on coercion.

The Logic of Identity

Thus terror emanates from any attempt to live beyond the social confinements of identity itself; and terror is also the means used to quell the primal disorderliness of the unconfined human being. After Vico a number of social theorists took up his vision of the modern social or state order as one in which authority is based principally upon the organization of coercive power, and neither upon national consent nor upon a benignly ordained and pre-existent harmony. Thus, for example, Sorel's notion of the general strike as a violent disruption of an unreasonable social nexus stems from such a supposition. Fanon's whole theory of colonial counter-violence (which contains in it some of the transgressive heroism that Vico assigns to the vanquished titans) answers to the rationalized violence of the colonial order, with its separation of the colonial from the native city, its attempts to include the native as a subordinate example of universalized 'Graeco-Roman' values, its swiftly retributive inclination when it is challenged or otherwise inhibited by its subaltern victims. Finally, there is Foucault's description of the order, discipline, discourse of society, gathering into itself the numerous specialized technologies for controlling, surveying, and manipulating knowledge and its producers, subject only occasionally to the heterogeneous, quixotic, venturesome counter-violence of the outcast, the visionary, the prophet.

In the contemporary contest between stable identity as it is rendered by such affirmative agencies as nationality, education, tradition, language and religion, on the one hand, and all sorts of marginal, alienated or,

in Immanuel Wallerstein's phrase, anti-systemic forces on the other, there remains an incipient and unresolved tension. One side gathers more dominance and centrality, the other is pushed further from the centre, towards either violence or new forms of authenticity like fundamentalist religion. In any event, the tension produces a frightening consolidation of patriotism, assertions of cultural superiority, mechanisms of control, whose power and ineluctability reinforce what I have been describing as the logic of identity. But since what I have been articulating is somewhat abstract and almost metaphysical, it is probably a good idea to be more concrete.

I want to look at two instances in which the power of what Adorno, in an English phrase coined for him by Martin Jay, has called 'identitarian thought' is deepened. These are first, media practice, and second, recent debates on education. Of the way in which immediate experience is emasculated by 'the consciousness industry', Adorno says: 'The total obliteration of the war by information, propaganda, commentaries, with cameramen in the first tanks and war reporters dying heroic deaths, the mishmash of enlightened manipulation of public opinion and oblivious activity: all this is another expression for the withering of experience, the vacuum between men and their fate, in which their real fate lies. It is as if the reified, hardened plaster-cast of events takes the place of events themselves. Men are reduced to walk-on parts in a monster documentary-film . . .'¹

It would be irresponsible to dismiss the effects of domestic electronic media coverage of the non-Western world—and with them the displacements that have occurred within print culture—on American attitudes to, and foreign policy towards, that world. I have elsewhere argued the case (which is more true today than it was when I first made it over ten years ago) that limited public access to the media coupled with an almost perfect correspondence between the ideology ruling the presentation and selection of news (whose agenda is set by certified experts in close collaboration with media managers) on the one hand, and prevailing government policy on the other, maintains a consistent pattern in the US imperial perspective towards the non-Western world. As a result, US policy has been supported by a mainstream 'identitarian' culture that has not been noticeably forceful in opposing its chief tenets: support for dictatorial and unpopular regimes, a scale of violence far out of proportion with the violence of native insurgency against American allies, a remarkably stable hostility towards the legitimacy of native nationalism, most of which is compressed into the word 'terrorism'. Out of this has come a stubbornly held conviction that American power in the world is the sentinel of freedom, or in President Johnson's words 'the guardian at the gate'.

The concurrence between such notions and the world-view promulgated by the media is therefore quite close. The history of other cultures is supposed to be non-existent until it erupts into confrontation with the United States, and hence is covered on the evening news. Most of what counts about foreign societies is reduced first into sixty-second items,

1 *Massive Morale*, Verso/BLB, London 1978, p 55

then into the question of whether they are pro- or anti-American (freedom, capitalism, democracy). The ultimate choice facing the professional interpreters of, or experts on, 'other' peoples, as these experts are framed by the media, is to tell the public whether what is happening is 'good' for America or not, and then to recommend a policy for action. Every commentator or expert a potential secretary of state.

The internalization of norms for use within cultural discourse, the rules that must be followed if statements are to be made, the 'history' that is made official as opposed to the history that isn't—these are some of the ways in which all national states regulate public discussion and private identity. The difference today is that the truly epochal scale of US global power, and with it the corresponding power of the national consensus created domestically by the electronic media, have precedents neither in the extent to which it is difficult to oppose this consensus nor in the ease and logic with which one unconsciously capitulates to it. Conrad saw Kurtz as a European in the African jungle, and Gould as an enlightened Westerner in the South American mountains, as capable of both civilizing and obliterating the natives. The same power, but on a world scale, is true of the United States today.

An Imperial Corpus

But my analysis would be incomplete were I not at this point to introduce another important element. In speaking of control and consensus one can use the word *bureaucracy* advisedly. I do not want at all to suggest that there is a directly imposed regime of conformity in the correspondence I have drawn between contemporary US media discourse and US policy in the subordinate, non-Western world. What I have been discussing is a system of pressures and constraints by which the whole cultural corpus retains its maddeningly imperial identity and its direction. This is why I think it is perfectly accurate to speak of a mainstream culture as possessing a certain regularity, integrity, or a system of predictable stresses over time.

In relation to mainstream American culture, marginalization by the imperial centre means a fate of provinciality. It means the inconsequence associated with what is not major, not central, not powerful—in short, it means association with what are considered euphemistically as alternative modes. And also alternative states, peoples, cultures. There are alternative theatres, presses, newspapers, artists, scholars, and styles. The images of centrality—which are directly connected with what C. Wright Mills called the power elite—supplant the much slower and reflective, the much less immediate and less quick processes of print culture, with its encoding of the attendant and relatively recalcitrant categories of historical class, inherited property, and traditional privilege. Centrality in American culture today is the dominance of the executive presence: the president, the TV commentator, corporate official, celebrity. And, finally, centrality is identity, what *is* powerful, important and ours. Centrality maintains balance between extremes, it endows ideas with the valences of moderation, rationality, pragmatism, it holds the middle together.

And centrality gives rise to semi-official narratives with the capacity to authorize and embody certain sequences of cause and effect, while at the same time preventing the emergence of counter-narratives. The commonest, and in this instance most effective, narrative sequence is America as a force for good in the world, regularly coming up against the obstacle of foreign conspiracy, which is usually perceived as ontologically mischievous and 'against' America. Thus American aid to Vietnam and Iran was corrupted either by communists or by terrorist fundamentalists; the result is 'our' humiliation and the bitterest sort of disappointment. Conversely the valiant Afghanistani *mawjahidin* ('Freedom-fighters') have much in common with Polish Solidarity, Nicaraguan *contras*, Angolan rebels, Salvadoran regulars: 'we' support them all. Left to our proper devices, 'we' would assume their victory, but the meddling efforts of liberals at home, disinformation experts abroad, have reduced our ability to help them to the fullest degree.

But to an even greater degree the power of such narratives is to interdict, marginalize or criminalize alternative versions of the same history—in Vietnam, Iran, the Middle East, Africa, Central America, Eastern Europe. A very simple empirical test of what I mean is what happens when you are given the opportunity to articulate a more complex, less narratively sequential history than the official ones carried by the media, which reinforce what corporate, government, and policy spokespersons rely upon. In fact you are compelled to re-tell 'fact' in such a way as to be inventing a language from scratch. The most difficult thing to do then is to suggest that the already existing history and presence of foreign societies may not have responded with automatic assent to the imposition of Western political or military power, not because there was anything inherently wrong with that power but because it was felt to be alien. To venture so apparently uncontroversial a truth about how all cultures in fact behave turns out to be nothing less than an act of delinquency, whereupon you feel that the enunciative opportunity offered you on the basis of pluralism and fairness is sharply restricted to inconsequential bursts of facts, stamped either as extreme or irrelevant. With no acceptable narrative to rely on, with no sustained permission for you to narrate, you feel yourself crowded out and silenced. Anything further you might wish to say or do is likely to become 'terrorism'.

The bleak picture I have drawn is intended to stress in a heightened way the processes of identity-enforcement that are likely to produce rejecting, violent and despairing responses by groups, nations and individuals whose place in the scheme is perforce inconsequential. Thus the triumph of identity by one culture or state almost always is implicated directly or indirectly in the denial, or the suppression of equal identity for other groups, states or cultures. Nationalism exacerbates the processes by offering what appears to be ethnosuicide as an alternative to clamorous demands for equality, for sovereignty, for national self-definition. And while it would be a mistake to ascribe all the problems associated with random violence to this maelstrom of escalating identity-demands, it would be an even graver mistake to ignore the process altogether. No one in the United States today speaks about limitations on sovereignty, for example, in rhetoric or in political discourse, and few people

here assume that there is a real alternative for superpowers than more or less to run the world. But if untrammelled aspirations based on projections of world power become the norm for political behaviour, what checks are there on others who may wish *either* to emulate these gigantic ambitions (the way 19th-century novelistic heroes felt that Napoleon was a model to be copied) or to bring down the whole edifice that prevents them from realizing the much smaller ambitions of statehood, cultural independence, self-expression?

As for recent debates on education, my second example, I shall have to be briefer. This audience of readers does not need to be told that post-modernism, post-Marxism, post-structuralism in intellectual discourse have engendered a strongly antagonistic response in many sectors of mainstream culture. Not only has this response involved various defences of 'the canon' of Western humanistic knowledge, but it has produced famously discussed screeds on such topics as the closing of the American mind, and cultural literacy, all of which have had the effect of clearing the space for a sanctioned rhetoric of national identity. This is now embodied in such documents as the Rockefeller Foundation-commissioned study *The Humanities in American Life*, or the various expostulations, much more politically inspired, of Secretary of Education William Bennett, who speaks not simply as an American cabinet officer, but as self-designated spokesman for the West, a sort of intellectual Head of the Free World.

What do such texts as these 'state of the culture' works tell us? Nothing less than that the humanities are important, central, traditional, inspiring. Bennett has gone as far as saying that we can 'have' the humanities by 'reclaiming' our traditions—the collective pronouns and the proprietary accents are crucially important—through twenty or so major texts. If every American student was required to read Homer, Shakespeare, the Bible and Jefferson, then we would have achieved a full sense of national purpose. Underlying all such epigonal replications of Matthew Arnold's exhortations to the significance of culture, is the social authority of patriotism, the fortifications of identity brought to us by our culture, whereby we can confront the world defiantly and self-confidently. This is a drastic constriction of what in more interesting contexts we have learned about culture—its productivity, its diversity of components, its critical and often contradictory energies, its radically antithetical characteristics, and above all its rich worldliness and complicity both with authority and with liberation. Instead we are told that cultural or humanistic study is the recuperation of the Judeo-Christian or Western heritage as free as possible both from native American culture—which the Judeo-Christian tradition in its early American-Puritan embodiments set out to exterminate—and from the fascinating adventures of that tradition in the peripheral non-Western world.

Yet the cultural disciplines have in fact found a hospitable haven in the academy, a historical truth of extraordinary magnitude. To a very great degree, Bennett's most recent rhetorical intervention ('To Reclaim a Heritage') has this accomplishment very much as its target, whereas we would have thought that it has always been a legitimate conception of the modern university's secular mission (as described by Alvin Gouldner) to

be a place where multiplicity and contradiction coexist with established dogma and canonical doctrine. This is now refuted by the rise of a new orthodoxy. Its supposition has been that once having admitted Marxism, structuralism, feminism, and Third World studies into the curriculum (and before that an entire generation of refugee scholars), the American university has sabotaged the basis of its supposed authority: hence, the need for steady tonic infusions of Homer and Jefferson, especially if these are administered by teachers convinced of our culture's superior mission in the world.

If by now the reader will have felt that I have wandered very far from 'terrorism' he/she will be correct, but only because representations of terrorism have been quarantined from the general affirmative and identitarian tendencies in culture at the present time. Yet it would be ridiculously frivolous for me to suggest that the dreadful violence of terrorist actions can somehow be mitigated by acknowledgement of these tendencies. What I am trying to suggest, however, is that it is a more worthwhile endeavour for us to historicize, analyse and reflect upon such tendencies than gregariously and ideologically to go along with the chorus of attacks and patriotic dirges that are lifted when the word 'terrorism' is pronounced. In other words there is room for intellectual discussion that partakes neither of the expert discourse of counter-terrorism, nor of the partisan affirmations about 'our' identity. That kind of discussion may involve taking positions on political conflicts in which terrorism or state-violence are regularly employed, but it would more centrally enlarge the scope of debate and induce a spirit of criticism as an antidote to the general yea-saying.

For it must be incumbent upon even those of us who support nationalist struggle in an age of unrestrained nationalist expression to have at our disposal some decent measure of intellectual refusal, negation and scepticism. It is at precisely that nexus of committed participation and intellectual commitment that we should situate ourselves to ask *how much* identity, *how much* positive consolidation, *how much* administered approbation we are willing to tolerate in the name of our cause, our culture, our state. What could be more disgracefully an instance of Benda's *trahison des clercs* than the political fervour of intellectuals for 'our' side, when so often it has been our side that has been committing the violence in the name of Western virtues, humanism, morality?

Talking about terrorism can therefore become an occasion for something other than solemn, self-righteous pontification about what makes 'us' worth protecting and 'them' worth attacking. In education, politics, history and culture there is at the present time a role to be played by secular oppositional intellectuals, call them a class of informed and effective wet blankets, who do not allow themselves the luxury of playing the identity game (leaving that to the legions who do it for a living) but who more compassionately press the interests of the unheard, the unrepresented, the unconnected people of our world, and who do so not in 'the jargon of authenticity' but with the accents of personal restraint, historical scepticism and committed intellect.

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review

Chris Wickham

Historical Materialism, Historical Sociology

Michael Mann has recently published a large book on the history of power which few historians or sociologists can afford to ignore.¹ Its 549 pages are only the first volume out of three; Mann's aim will at the end be a massive retheorization of the sociology of power, on the basis of historical examples taken from the span of human history from the Neolithic Revolution to the present day. Vol. II will complete the history in the capitalist/industrial world (it will include a discussion of gender relations too); Vol. III will be the theoretical volume. However, there is plenty of theory in Vol. I, integrated into the historical analysis with a stylish verve and (usually) a satisfying neatness. Mann is ambitious: he remarks in his first sentence that he initially wanted to refute Marx and 'reorganize' Weber and, although he indicates that he has stepped back a bit from this, he still does, really. Whether he has ultimately managed or not will presumably have to await Vol. III: not least because Marx (although not, of course, Weber) was not particularly concerned with the pre-capitalist world. But Mann's models are already pretty clear in

Vol. I, and we can learn a good deal about how far he has reached. Enough, indeed, for me: I am a practising historian, and prefer to discuss my theory as intermingled as possible with historical example.

Mann's arguments are rich and complex, and one cannot possibly hope to engage critically with them all. He is also very skilled at covering his back with qualificatory paragraphs and throwaway lines that reintroduce the subtleties of analysis that the historian likes, and that Mann's main lines of argument inevitably, and properly, exclude. His control over his material and over his models impresses the reader, almost throughout. He has not reorganized Weber (a hard task, given Weber's complexity and heterogeneity), but it is with Weber that one finds oneself comparing the book, which is already no mean achievement. The other pole of the comparison would, however, not yet be Marx, but perhaps rather Perry Anderson, whose two books *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* and *Lineages of the Absolutist State* represented, a decade or so earlier, a similar sweep across history, expressed with a similar *jeu de virre*. That Anderson's standpoint is Marxist and Mann's what could be called post-Weberian is not a result of this time difference (Mann started his book in 1972), but the dates of publication of the two works, considering the difference in their intellectual positions, are emblematic: I will return to the point at the end. Mann is often tighter than Anderson, who, ironically, can easily get sidetracked into issues of strictly political history with insufficient regard for the socio-economic structures developing below; Anderson, by contrast, has a wider perspective than Mann, that in part derives simply from his use of books in more languages than Mann (whose bibliography is restricted to works in English, with a few in French), but is largely the result of a much greater interest in comparison. Mann's (un-Weberian) caution about comparison is in fact one of his weak points, as I shall argue later.²

My intention in this review will not be to take Mann on in order to rescue Marxist history from his critique. This would be premature, but also, more important, pointless: for Mann has a great deal to offer Marxists, and (as Weber did, though less covertly) employs a fair amount of explicitly Marxian analysis. Where he differs from Marxism, it is often because he wants to analyse different historical processes from those that form part of the Marxist project. So, instead, I will begin by following through some of his arguments in a constructive spirit, commenting on what I see as his strengths and weaknesses. I will look at his analyses of the origins of the state, of the development of empires, and of Christianity and the rise of Europe. To conclude, I will discuss some of the more general issues that arise from Mann's discussions of the relationships he shows us between his four sources of social power, ideological, economic, military and political; for these four sources and their interrelationships form the theoretical core and the narrative dynamic of his book.

¹ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, I: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*, CUP, Cambridge 1986

² One can get an idea of the difference in approach between Anderson and Mann in the former's review of the latter in *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 December 1986

Social Interaction

Mann alarms us on p.2: 'it may seem an odd position for a sociologist to adopt; but if I could, I would abolish the concept of "society" altogether.' The alarm may not be Mann's fault, for doubtless he wrote the sentence before Margaret Thatcher pronounced that society did not exist; in fact, however, he is not as radical as appears at first sight. He means, above all, two things: that societies are not *unitary*, for there are many intersecting networks of social relationships in any environment, which cannot be tightly articulated into a single social 'structure' or 'system'; and that they are not *bounded*, for these networks overlap those in other 'societies', rendering any neat territorialization impossible. He defends this perspective against both Marxist and Weberian theory (pp. 11-18): a little unnecessarily, perhaps, for the Marxist conception of the social formation, even if it regards the economy as a whole as primary, by no means entails a 'unitary society'—indeed, in many formulations, it explicitly excludes it; and I have encountered both Marxists and Weberians who have little trouble with the concept of unbounded social interaction, which seems to me, too, to be a normal part of any sophisticated historical analysis. Mann argues, further, that the non-coincidence of state, culture and the economy makes any simple causal models *a priori* invalid. He implies (p.4) that 'ultimate primacy' is something we can still look for (presumably he will unveil how in Vol. III); but 'the economy', or 'ideology', cannot do the job on its own simply because the networks of power are not superimposed. Instead, they float freely, and interrelate causally in different ways at different historical times. Be this as it may, Marxists will perhaps be relieved to find that Mann's explanations are usually in reality, although always complex, largely materialist (more often, as I shall argue, than he says)—just as most people will be relieved to find that he uses the word 'society' throughout as a heuristic term.

How Mann proceeds can be clearly seen in his discussions of the origins of stratification, civilization and the state (distinct concepts, but in effect, in history, appearing together), which form the core of his first three historical chapters (pp. 34-129). He argues that human society evolves almost naturally towards ranking, but not beyond ranks to firm stratification, the creation of irreversible hierarchies that involve coercive power over people. Here, evolution stops and more complex social processes take over; change henceforth is more usually cyclic (the endless repetition of similar patterns) than structural (the irreversible move from one pattern to another), and the development of stratification is a structural change. Mann does not like the concept of social evolution, partly because it does not explain global human development (he spends many pages on this issue, although the fact that human societies have not all developed in the same direction or at the same rate does not need much demonstration); but also, more important for his model, because evolution is essentially an endogenous explanation, and Mann's theory of unbounded networks leads him to regard endogenous structural change as virtually impossible. Mann has a reasonable point here; in particular, it does indeed make little sense to see any clearly bounded social groups *before* the development of the state. Instead, he explains his first state/civilized society, Sumer, as the product of a social dialectic,

a 'caging' process in an irrigated landscape, where a network of small political groupings (the ancestors of the Sumerian city-states) interacted with nearby non-irrigating frontier societies. The inhabitants of the irrigated world were discouraged from abandoning rising rulers by the simple ('caging') fact that the non-irrigated world was poorer; the rulers began, perhaps, as local 'big men', but soon acquired real and permanent political power through their control of the exchange interstices between irrigated core and frontier periphery (pp. 73-89).

At first sight, this explanation does not differ greatly from a materialist evolutionist one, for Mann argues that this process happened most characteristically where an irrigated landscape interacted with a non-irrigated one (Sumer, China, the Indus, etc.). That is to say, when ranked societies got the chance, thanks to geography, to become stratified, they did so. Furthermore, when he confesses that Egypt, the major Eurasian exception to the model, managed to develop the state without any internal or external interactions (for Egypt had no independent cities; and no frontier either, for the Nile runs through desert—pp. 108-15), i.e. necessarily endogenously, one wonders whether Mann has not been too strict in his catastrophist anti-evolutionism.³ But he is certainly right to stress that the rarity of the process and the length of time (many centuries) it took, even in successful areas like Sumer, mean that the *break* represented by stratification/civilization has to be explained as rigorously as possible. (It is noteworthy that he is more rigorous here, where there is of course no direct historical evidence at all, than he is in his discussions of the next major break, the origins of capitalism, where there is no shortage of material.) Mann's network model leads him to stress the fruitful historical role of dual social systems, small city states in a wider cultural continuum ('multi-power-actor civilizations'), which he finds in all his early civilizations except Egypt, as well as in Greece, (in part) Rome, and (with the city enlarged to the region or nation) medieval and modern Europe. He favours a double dialectic, that between the two levels of this continuum (city-state and wider culture) and that between the core cultural system and its frontier neighbours, in all his major historical cruxes, in fact. I like this model very much; it seems to me subtle, powerful, and capable of a great deal of interesting variation. Whether or not it is as anti-evolutionist as Mann says I think simply depends on one's use of language. (The link between evolution and the dialectic goes back to Engels.) It is certainly not anti-materialist, however. Marxists are not likely to criticize it because of its rejection of purely endogenous explanation. They are likely to be critical, on the other hand, of Mann's relative inattention to the relations of production, whose increasing exploitativeness he skips over rather fast (e.g. pp. 84, 101, 110, 113); the landlord-peasant relationship is mentioned, but never theorized, here or later, as we will see. But Mann is not so interested in the development of the economy; his conceptual focus, here as later, is really the state.

³ Mann does not spurn comparison in this section, for all his early civilizations emerged from similar societies. His comparisons (pp. 105-24) are, however, somewhat hurried, one feels that he would almost be happier with a diffusionist model for civilizations (e.g. pp. 107, 117, 118), despite the difficulties in explaining how coercive power-structures could possibly diffuse culturally.

The Development of Empire

The next stage that Mann confronts is the development of empire, which he treats as a rising cyclical trend lasting nearly three millennia, starting with Sargon of Akkad and ending with late Rome (pp. 130–78, 231–300; the interval break is devoted to the discovery of iron, the Phoenicians, and in particular the Greeks). These chapters are highly satisfying and complex analyses of the effects of military power on overall socio-economic development. Here, in Mann's analysis, three of his four power sources—economic, political and military—spin free of each other (ideology not, perhaps, quite yet, as we will see); and military power is in this historical epoch the causal element in the dynamic. Like other commentators, I think Mann's distinction between political and military power is artificial, and insufficiently theorized (he will have to talk over doubters in Vol. III with more care). But this point is less important than his articulated and flowing description of the possibilities and limits of military control. He shows how hard it is, logistically, to maintain intensive military control over anything more than about a hundred kilometres' radius (pp. 137–42); ancient empires were 'extensive' dominations, which all had to rule through local élites. Nonetheless, they were not, or not wholly, parasitic; they increased production by extracting surplus for the army, by maintaining peace, by protecting exchange, by building roads, by establishing economic value, by intensifying exploitation, by favouring literacy—economic development and repression (viz. economic power and political/military power) hand in hand (p. 153). Mann works out the argument first for Akkad; but it still works, after at least eight cycles of imperial rise and decline, for Rome, where the organizational coherence of the legion allowed effective political control to extend far beyond its original radius (p. 272–80). Indeed, the argument for Rome (economic development related to repression) is a widely known one, for of course it involves not just the legionary economy but the greatest development hitherto known of slavery as a mode of production; the relationship would, indeed, have been even clearer if Mann had discussed Roman commercial activity more, for Roman commerce flourished very largely on the back of the state (see pp. 264, 271–2 for brief references; but the literature is largely in Italian⁴).

Mann's point here, and it is a convincing one, is that economic development and the forms of political/military power are related dialectically, and *advance* as a result; nearly every political cycle produces a stronger state, and therefore a more developed economy (e.g. pp. 169–74, against Weberians; pp. 222–3, against Marxists). He regards this as a non-materialist position (e.g. p. 223)—that is, he holds that the simple fact that political relationships, though themselves having economic preconditions, have economic effects itself disproves a Marxist interpretation. This is not true. Mann's position only *seems* non- (or quasi-) materialist because the state has not been theorized sufficiently as an *economic form*, in particular in its relationships with the landowning class, the 'aristocracy'. To Mann, there is no contradiction between the state and private property, because the stronger the state, the richer *all* élites

⁴ For some bibliography, see *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988).

will be, central or local (p. 165). But, nonetheless, aristocrats really exercise local power, and states cannot stop them, although they would like to (pp. 169-70)—the most the state can do is englobe them ideologically, as the Persians and the Romans did, and try to control them that way (pp. 240-2, 267-70). These statements are not wholly consistent; the inconsistency is fuzzed by Mann's lack of interest in assessing the nature and extent of the state's economic expropriations, and the conflict between them and the expropriations of aristocrats, a conflict which could often be intense, as in late Rome.⁵ Economic power 'develops' in Mann's discussions, by which he means that there is an increasing amount of wealth moving around his developing empires; but exactly how *production* develops to allow this to occur is not adequately discussed. (Mann does not think production is necessarily more important than circulation in economic analysis—pp. 24-5; but he would hardly deny that for exchange to develop, production has to as well.⁶) One might say that Mann's preoccupation with economic *power* stops him from looking carefully enough at how the economy itself *works*. But of course Mann is writing a history of power, not a world history. Inside this limit, he is coherent and convincing. His discussions of the organizing role of the legions in his Roman chapter, or of the differences between symmetrical and asymmetrical class struggle in the section on the Greeks, for example, work extremely effectively. There may be more to be said about economic development than Mann thinks, but this is one of the best overall syntheses of ancient history that I have seen, and all ancient historians (all historians) will derive a great deal of profit from it.

'Ideological Power'

Thus far, up to the end of the ancient world, I find Mann's analyses very stimulating; not perhaps as a startlingly novel set of theses, but as a series of tight discussions of the dialectic between economic and political/military structures in the development of states. It is the second half of the book that I find more problematic: in his use of 'ideological power' as a causative factor, and in his explanations for the rise of Europe.

Mann sees one of the major world-historical developments as being the development of transcendental, salvationist religions, notably Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, and he devotes two central

⁵ For late Rome, see pp. 283-95, more a brief history than a structural analysis. I have discussed these issues elsewhere, in *Past and Present* 103 (1983), pp. 3-36, and *Journal of Peasant Studies* 12 (1985), pp. 166-96.

⁶ Where production does come in, as with the discussion of the Iron Age, it is restricted to techniques (pp. 184-6), and separated from the discussion of Greek *relations* of production (pp. 216-21, a succinct piece of explicit Marxism, based on G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, London 1982), neither analysis is tied into his discussion of early empires. For Rothé, he does try harder to relate the two (pp. 260-7, 284-5), but on p. 265 his proof of the economic benefits of empire for production is largely restricted to a relative rise in agricultural yields—a doubtful argument on the figures he produces, and essentially non-explanatory. *how* does imperial rule increase yields? (On p. 266 he also claims that payment in cash indicates higher living standards than payment in kind, because living standards are to be directly equated with the presence of exchange; this is really strange.)

chapters (pp. 301–72) to the issue, and in particular to Christianity.⁷ This is not surprising; it conforms to his model of the four equal power sources, one of them ideological, which underpinned his discussions of the ancient world. But in that world (except perhaps in Greece) ideology was essentially a side-effect of the political system; with the salvationist religions, it finally gained an autonomy from the political structure and could begin to have a more independent causal force (see pp. 363–71 for the general theory, as usual very subtly expressed). Christianity allowed the development for the first time of a cultural network uniting the élite and the masses (p. 328). Power relationships became intensified as a result: so intense that (pp. 334–5) the Christian church could, somehow, actually have mobilized the masses of the western Roman empire against the barbarians, and its failure to do so marked the downfall of the empire in the West. Subsequently, Christianity and its bearer institution, the church, was the major supplier of Roman traditions to the Germanic barbarians (pp. 335–8); the major element of temporal and spatial continuity in post-Roman western Europe; the underpinning of the military morale that prevented Islam from overcoming Europe (p. 346);⁸ and, most important (pp. 376–409), the regulatory system that allowed Europe to become the first capitalist region in the world. These are large claims; let us look at some of them.

Christianity, like most salvationist religions, holds that all men and women are in principle equal. Is this significant for the development of mankind? Up to a point: the Bible, being written down, has this principle in it as one possible reading, although not the only one, and those who have wanted to find this reading have done so—some may have even come to believe in egalitarianism as a *consequence* of such a reading. At least intermittently, churchmen have been persuaded that one of their duties should be the instruction of the lower classes in Christian beliefs. Gregory, bishop of Tours (d. 594), a copious commentator on his own time, looked down on the urban and rural poor from a great height, as a political bishop in the Merovingian Frankish world and a descendant of an ancient Roman senatorial family; but what the lower classes did was of *interest* to him, and he tells us about it in his *Histories*, in a way that Tacitus, for example, never dreamt of doing.⁹ His younger contemporary Pope Gregory the Great (d. 610), a man with a similar background, organized the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, as every English school child (still?) knows, and wrote a preaching handbook that laid stress on the methods that would be of use to ‘admonish’ the unlearned. Pagan Roman élite culture, by contrast, had been a culture of and for an élite, who were indeed defined at least in part by the unavailability of this culture to the great majority of the population.

⁷ The spread of Christianity is particularly well analysed (pp. 303–26), and stands up well to the more recent appearance of a major synthesis by Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London 1986).

⁸ Not a very convincing theory, I have to say. The Arabs were at the extreme edge of their command networks at Poutiers and Constantinople (as the Persians were at Mauthoon—p. 244), it's scarcely surprising they got no further (At the other corner of their world in Chinese Turkestan, they *was* at Talas in 751, but they never got to China.) How, anyway, can we assess Christian morale at Pottiers? We have no evidence on the matter at all.

⁹ cf. E. Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton 1953), pp. 84–7.

What, however, does this counterposition show? It does not show that pagan Roman ideological systems did not englobe the poor—though these systems were certainly heterogeneous. Both the rural and urban lower classes participated in pagan festivals in the Roman world, for example, or sacrificed to gods. Slaves, peasants, and urban artisans and sub-proletarians were all, in principle, absorbed into a framework of ideological legitimation for the Roman emperor, the empire, and the official and landowning élites. As in all epochs, sometimes this worked and sometimes it did not. Rome, like Greece before it, was not short of episodes of overt class struggle, as de Ste. Croix has monumentally shown: conversely, all sorts of people could respect the imperial order enough to think it worthwhile to petition emperors personally, and even, sometimes, got a reply.¹⁰ None of these things was affected by the Christianization of the late Empire, which merely put a new veneer over several interlocking (and conflicting) sets of traditional classical values. The two Gregories, even after the western Empire fell, were as concerned as was the Emperor Hadrian—neither more nor less—that the lower classes should accept the rules of society as it was. Although they believed, as Hadrian may not have done, that the right-living poor would achieve salvation, and regarded it as their own role to help them do so, they did not believe that the poor should be culturally (even less, of course, socially) equivalent to the élite; there is no sign, either in this period or later, until well beyond 1300, that the lower classes were likely to receive more than elementary religious instruction. Other ways in which ruling-class ideology imposed itself on the lower classes, most obviously through the hegemony of the aristocracy and the state, remained unchanged: both before and after the victory of Christianity, and even (though the form of the state became very different) before and after the Germanic invasions of the Roman empire. But this hegemony (in the Gramscian sense) was merely the legitimation of a set of *economic*, class, relationships; ideology was not autonomous from the economy here.

I would argue, then, that Christianity had relatively little effect on the power of social mobilization that Roman or post-Roman élites had at their disposal; nothing in its traditions was as strong as the old relationships (both coercive and ideological) between landowners and peasants, or rulers and subjects, which themselves, of course, changed, but not usually for religious reasons. Mann, indeed, tends, with the appearance of salvationist religions, to neglect the fact that ideology does not have to be *religious*. Where Christianity did, certainly, innovate was in the creation of a new *institutional* structure alongside the old ones, which was soon well funded, rich in land, and therefore powerful: the church. The relationship between church(es) and state(s) remained a constant in European history until the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries (an endpoint Mann interestingly discusses, pp. 463–72), and this dialectic certainly contributed to institutional and ideological change. But churchmen came from a wider society, and very largely shared in that society's values. 'The church' could not be 'the leading agent of translocal extensive social organization' (p. 337); it was *part* of that organization,

¹⁰ F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, London 1977, pp. 240–52, comp. de Ste Croix, *Class Struggle*, op cit., pp. 372–402.

an internal, as much as an external, element, and its impact was also, of course, not purely ideological: another set of dialectical relationships.

The Rise of Western Europe

Mann's vision of Christianity is extended in chapter 12, as he begins to explain the rise of Europe (western Europe, that is). His image of this 'dynamic', which he discusses across four chapters (pp. 373–517), is not one of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, or not only, but, rather, the appearance of capitalism simultaneously with the nation state. To the latter, he devotes a lengthy, and effective, argument (pp. 416–90, 510–16), showing how it arose largely through the continuous demands and development of warfare; once again, not that new an idea, but seldom as well displayed as it is here. Much recent (mostly, but not all, non-Marxist) theory of the origins of capitalism lays considerable stress on the competition between nation states and the relative political weakness, but, conversely, the technological (and organizational) advances, that this engendered.¹¹ Mann does too, but he plays it down as a *cause* of capitalism, even though it would have fitted perfectly well into his overall model; instead, for him, the directions towards capitalism are already clear well before 1300, i.e. before the nation state, and are essentially conditioned by Christianity. It was Christendom that made western Europeans feel themselves to be one culture, despite political, linguistic and class differences. It was churchmen who kept Europe internally peaceful, at least sometimes; who maintained the pre-fourteenth-century balance of power; and who allowed trade to extend across political boundaries, thus integrating a fragmented West into a single, thriving, economic system (pp. 376–83). The church also acted as a back-up both to ruling-class hegemony and to later mediaeval opposition to this hegemony in heresies and peasant revolts (pp. 384–90); this indeed, is generally accepted. But that it went beyond this role, and integrated western Europe *on its own*, is harder to accept.

The claim that Christianity, or the church, provided the 'normative pacification' necessary for trade to thrive (pp. 383, 395–6, 407–9) is by no means satisfactory. Mann means by this above all that traders were safer if they moved from Christian territory to Christian territory. That traders were in general protected in western Europe is true, but not because it was *Christian*; rather, because the cultural unity of the West originated in, or (in the case, for example, of England) was heavily influenced by, the integrative *political* network of the Merovingian and Carolingian Franks, whose inheritance structured the whole of western development until at least the twelfth century. Charlemagne protected traders because they brought him prestige goods and therefore status—and because they were potentially dangerous and needed to be watched; not because the church told him to. In other respects Mann's statement

¹¹ e.g. E. L. Jones, *The European Miracle*, Cambridge 1941; J. Bacchiler, *The Origins of Capitalism*, Oxford 1973. Anderson's vision of the process also gives much weight to the nation-state issue. A third element in the dialectic is the growth of absolute property rights (it was crucial for Marx, of course, and among non-Marxists it is stressed, for example, by D. C. North and R. P. Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World*, Cambridge 1973), although it seems to me—there is no space, unfortunately, to show it here—that it is an issue which has been widely misunderstood.

is even stranger. The Vikings traded from the Channel to the Volga without any difficulty, despite the fact that most of this area was by no means Christian, as indeed they were not, for a long time, themselves. The Arabs ran the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean, on a scale that makes the twelfth-century Rhine-Rhône commercial corridor look slight, without the least need to rely on an integrative religious (or political) system.¹² Why should traders in a non-Christian mediaeval western Europe, had Europe not become Christianized, have had any greater difficulty?

When Mann goes beyond this argument, he does not become more convincing. Christianity had a role in the technological dynamism of the mediaeval West, because (p. 406) it legitimated the 'effective local possession of autonomous economic resources', by which he means what Marxists would call feudal relationships. It did legitimate them, of course; but non-Christian lords would scarcely have found it harder. Christianity provided what Weber called 'rational restlessness' (pp. 397-8, 501-2),¹³ thus helping Europeans to make their technological breakthroughs, while at the same time regulating society in a Durkheimian way so as to make these breakthroughs fruitful; Mann justifies this by arguing that religion pervaded both upper-class and heterodox ideology in the middle ages. This, I have already said, is true enough, but it hardly allows us to claim that heterodox social thought, for example, was *dependent* on Christianity; not before the eighteenth century has heterodoxy (which exists in all societies, both as alternative ruling-class ideology and as class struggle) *not* been expressed in at least partially religious terms. I would not wish to argue that Christianity was of no importance or relevance at all, or that the church was merely another analogue to the state; but their autonomies were not so great that the tramlines of European economic development can be more than marginally associated with them. Mann's principal attempt to show ideology as independently causal does not, it seems to me, hold.

A further reason why it does not hold is that the economic side of the European dynamic, the thriving thrusting agrarian economy that looks forward inescapably to the capitalist world, is placed too early. (Indeed, if it had been placed later, Christianity could hardly have been regarded as an autonomous force at all.) Mann sees this in place by the twelfth century, and probably already in its essentials by 1000, if not 800 (pp. 399-409). It is a north-western European phenomenon, and marks the point when the 'leading edge' of history leaves the Mediterranean for

¹² G. Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, Oxford 1968, e.g. pp. 250-6; K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, Cambridge 1985, e.g. pp. 54-60.

¹³ Mann is careful here, for he does not wish to adopt a 'vulgar Weberian' explanation attributing to ideology the failure of other civilisations to produce capitalism (pp. 501ff.). Indeed, he has everywhere stressed that *no* social change is monocausal, either theoretically or empirically, as we have seen (cf. p. 408). But he does say (p. 507) that Christendom was *necessary* for the European dynamic, apparently in contrast to at least some other ideologies and world religions (although not, perhaps, Islam), and he does (p. 501) link this explicitly to 'rational restlessness'. But one of his axioms (p. 4) is that restlessness, purposiveness and rationality are 'the original source of power' (my emphasis). Why should they then end up encapsulated above all in Christianity?

the Atlantic coast.¹⁴ The population rose, yields improved, and major agricultural technical developments (the mill, the heavy plough, the three field system) spread through Europe. The intensive intercutting social organizations of the manor and the village structured these developments, and ecological differences promoted exchange; the church, of course, lay behind all these phenomena. They were all in full swing *before* the state began to refine its organization, in the mid-twelfth century and onwards. And, with the help of the developing structures of market exchange and the developing structures of the state, they moved onwards towards the 'European miracle': 'The difficult part of the explanation is over', for neo-classical economics and Marxist theory can take us easily on from here (p. 409). Indeed, there are few enough references to economic development at all in the book for the period after 1200, although we still have over a hundred pages to go.

Towards Industrial Capitalism

What Mann means by this argument is that by the central middle ages (let us say the twelfth century; it would be unfair to hold him to his claims for the ninth) north-west Europe was so much more advanced in the crucial underpinnings for future development that it was *not surprising* that industrial capitalism should first appear in the central moorlands of an obscure offshore island of Eurasia. Europe was 'already the most agriculturally inventive civilization seen since the Iron Age had begun' (p. 500). Its western fringes were by now well ahead of China in the intensity of their agricultural techniques (p. 406); we have no right to feel inferior when looking at the splendour of the Asian empires of the middle ages (p. 378), for they were built on more antiquated, extensive, political and economic structures, and Europe would soon render them out of date, by 1500 at the latest. As a result, all standard rationales for the appearance of capitalism (towns, peasant uprisings, the Renaissance, navigation, science, Protestantism, etc.) start too late in history (p. 501).

There are two replies that can be easily made here, one empirical and the other comparative. I do not wish to spend much space on the empirical one, but it must at least be said that it is far from clear that twelfth-century Europe was on a clear track to industrial capitalism. Mercantile activity was flourishing, but it was still fully englobed in the supply and demand network of the feudal aristocracy, and it would stay inside that network (and inside that of the rising state) until the fifteenth century at the earliest. There is no sign of any serious move towards agricultural investment before then, or of any advance out of the craft artisanal network that characterized all the major Eurasian economies of the period. The bounciness of twelfth-century Europe, which can be found in all aspects of its history (there's even some class struggle, with village communities establishing communal rights against landlords), did not entail qualitative development in the *relations* of production; mills and heavy ploughs, simple technological change, are scarcely going

¹⁴ This point of change seems (pp. 400-1) to be based on population graphs that show north-west Europe overtaking Mediterranean Europe in population in 800. These graphs are at that point based on pure fantasy; again, there isn't any evidence at all.

to do this on their own. Of course, European capitalism descends genealogically from the Europe of the twelfth century, but economic change was still cyclic rather than structural. The more crucial moments of structural advance took place above all in the years between 1350 and 1700, where, indeed, the standard debates locate them.¹⁵

The comparative aspect of this extends my argument. Point by point, everything Mann describes as the intensive agricultural and political patterns characteristic of north-west Europe can be found in Sung China in the twelfth century or so, often at a much more developed level. Mann (p. 406) quotes Chaunu to claim that animals gave Europeans five times as much energy per person as the Chinese had.¹⁶ The Chinese had relatively few animals, it is true, or at least fewer than in Europe. Rice cultivation, too, requires careful transplanting by hand, and animals can only help with parts of it. But, even then, Chinese ploughs were in many respects more sophisticated than European ones until the eighteenth century. And Mann, who stresses the major importance of European cereal yields rising from about 3:1 in c.1100 to 4:1 and more by the late middle ages, is evidently unaware that rice gives yields of 50-100:1. Furthermore, no one could claim that the sophisticated and complex irrigation techniques of the Yangtse Delta were not intensive, or that they did not need highly organized local collective cooperation, at least on the level of the northern European common field and probably rather more so. By the twelfth century, several substantial areas of China specialized in cash crops such as tea or fruits that could be exchanged for staples in a structured market system. The social division of labour was developing, and merchant capital was based on a complex credit system. Under the Sung, population density was higher than Europe's with no signs of Malthusian dangers (new strains of rice could crop twice or three times a year). Artisanal work was flourishing, and in the crucial areas of textiles and ceramics was technologically highly sophisticated, well above European levels. These statements are not controversial ones; they come from three standard syntheses, two of them available to Mann and one even cited by him.¹⁷ They do not prove that China would maintain this developmental sophistication, and of course it did not; but they greatly weaken any idea that Europe was yet, in the twelfth century, anything special. In the end, it would be: but why Europe pulled ahead economically (and why China did not) must be seen in a late mediaeval and early modern perspective that

¹⁵ Refs in n 11, for Marxist economic analyses, see the debates collected in R. Hilton, ed., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London 1976, especially the contributions of Hilton and Merrington, and in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin, eds., *The Brunner Debate*, Cambridge 1985, especially the contributions of Brenner and Bow, see further, among many, G. Bow, *The Crisis of Feudalism*, Cambridge 1984, P. Kriedte, *Peasants, Landlords and Merchant Capitalists*, Leamington 1983, a reference I owe to Maxine Berg. There is no point in going into their very varied explanations here, despite the importance of the subject, for Mann barely analyses them at all, as, indeed, his use of the current term 'European miracle' shows, for such a term by definition excludes rational analysis.

¹⁶ P. Chaunu, *L'expansion européenne du XIII^e au XV^e siècle*, Paris 1969, p. 336. Chaunu's calculation is for the fifteenth century, not the twelfth. His figures for Europe are guessimates from Brundel, whose calculation is for as late as 1750, it is unclear what the basis of the Chinese figure is (Chaunu's discussion of Europe and China, pp. 334-9, is however, interesting.)

¹⁷ Y. Shiba, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, Michigan 1970, M. Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, Stanford 1973, pp. 113-212; F. Bray, *Science and Civilization in China*, vi 2, Cambridge 1984, pp. 179-93, 251-98, 476, 492-616.

Mann does not anywhere discuss. This section of the book must, then, be seen as the weakest.

The Possibility of Historical Comparison

I have discussed the issues of Christianity and the mediaeval European origins of capitalism at some length, for two reasons. First, because Mann's discussion of Christianity is his main empirical argument for the causal role of autonomous ideological power in the arena of economics, and it does not seem to me to stand up. Second, because his overestimation of mediaeval Europe reflects two general weaknesses in the book: his hostility to comparison, and his concern with the 'leading edge' of civilization, which, he believes, started in Sumer and slowly moved west and north, ending up in Britain (and, in Vol. II, America)—a perspective that *a priori* is evidently not going to leave much for the Chinese.

Mann does compare 'societies', in particular in the first half of his book, but as he goes on and they diverge more and more, he becomes more and more dubious of the utility of comparison: his societies are no longer autonomous; they are too diverse; and, of course, holistic social comparison is not licit if 'society' is not a unitary concept (pp. 175, 188-9, 370-1, 501-3). In the last of these discussions, he partially confronts the Chinese example I have just given (and even more partially that of Islam), but retreats from it on the grounds that four reasons have been suggested for Chinese developmental blockage—the absence of a division of labour and exchange, a repressive state, no multi-state competition, and a conformist culture (the four of course reflect Mann's four different power sources)—and that 'we have no means of knowing by comparison which of these forces, alone or in combination, made the crucial difference, because we cannot vary them'. This is feeble; it represents a truly simplistic justification of empiricism, one certainly rejected by Mann's procedures elsewhere. Mann is certainly capable of seeing through false claims, and does so in other parts of the book with some verve. His four explanations cited above do not have identical truth-values, and none of them is particularly convincing as it stands; he could easily have criticized them, and his failure to do so is striking. Mann does not reject comparison *epistemologically* (p. 503), and this is just as well, for all his analyses of development are intrinsically comparative (before vs. after), and his discussion of the 'leading edge' is, too, implicitly comparative by definition. He merely claims that *in practice* comparison is impossible, for we 'simply do not have enough autonomous, analogical cases' (though contrast pp. 173-4, where he seems to say the opposite). Historians do not, however, compare in this mechanistic way; it is not a conceptually difficult process to extract given social elements from a matrix (or set of networks) and see how they operate differently in different environments. Indeed, it does not seem to me that any non-teleological historical explanation is epistemologically possible at all without doing so. How can one, just to take a single example, analyse why (most of) northern Europe went Protestant unless one simultaneously analyses why (most of) southern Europe stayed Catholic? (Mann in fact says this on p. 466.) Mann is probably over-reacting against the static and schematic comparisons made by

others in his own discipline (e.g. pp. 169–74); but it would be a curious irony if historians were to have to reintroduce comparativism into sociology.

Mann's theory of the 'leading edge' of power is problematic too. He very much does not want it to be teleological and meta-historical (pp. 508–10, 538–40); its movement towards the North and West is a chance mixture of ecological advance westwards into Europe and the blockage of stable traditional empires succeeding each other in the Near East. But this is not what makes the argument teleological. Instead, the teleological element derives from Mann's choice of elements that push power-structures forward in the specific direction of Western capitalism. So when Iron Age agriculture developed in Anatolia and south-east Europe, it is no longer necessary for Mann to consider the fertile crescent or China, *including* the question of whether the latter two remained more productive than the former, for it was the former that led to Greece, and, in the end, to capitalism. Similarly, when the weak feudal state, Christianity, and further agro-technological advance interacted in early mediaeval north-west Europe, it is no longer necessary to look at Islamic trade or agriculture,¹⁸ or at Muslim states (obviously archaic, or, indeed, repetitiously tribal—p. 502),¹⁹ or at the whole Sung network whose economic patterns I have briefly characterized, for they were obviously less intensive than anything north-west European (p. 378). It is because Mann does not bother to compare *here* that his argument becomes meta-historical. Nothing, too, in his 'leading edge' arguments should lead him to regard north-west Europe as the only relevant part of European development; the multi-actor network of mediaeval Italian city states ought for example to fit all his criteria for advance, but barely even get mentioned (p. 437). (But they are already on the wrong side of Europe, and are, as well, ill-analysed in English.) I would conclude that the whole 'leading edge' argument in its present form is a *post facto* justification for the direction of Mann's interest, rather than a true structural trend. It could even, perhaps, be excised without doing violence to his wider arguments.

Mann and Materialism

These are weaknesses; but there are also many strengths. Mann is an honest analyst; he tells you what he is doing and why, and even admits to his omissions and sleight of hand (e.g. pp. 450, 538–9): one trusts him. His discursive conclusion (pp. 518–41) is a *tour de force* of constructive definition, process and hypothesis about how different sorts of power relationships combine together, and it must be taken seriously by all historians and sociologists, Marxist and non-Marxist alike. If Mann can write a convincing conclusion called 'Patterns of world-historical development in agrarian societies', almost all empirical and structural

¹⁸ Agriculture in the Islamic world was often very advanced: see A. M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*, Cambridge 1983—though his explanations for the patterns he describes are less plausible.

¹⁹ An idea he takes from Ernest Gellner's *Muslim Society*, Cambridge 1981, and thence from Ibn Khaldūn. Gellner is, however, only really talking about the Maghreb, as he himself admits (pp. 31, 72–83)—although he seems to think, and others have as a result followed him, that the Maghreb is *typically* Muslim, and that Egypt, the whole fertile crescent, and Iran are a mere aberration.

disagreement in the preceding pages could be regarded as marginal: he shows us that the *concept* of 'social power', although a broad term, is not mere rhetoric, and the insights he derives from it serve well as an appetite-whetter for Vol. III. Economic processes and political/military power must be recognized, more explicitly than Marxists often recognize them, as being in a permanent dialectical relationship in history, although, as I have argued, ideological power does not seem quite as autonomous as the other two. Mann's models even give us a tighter set of criteria than those we often use for when to look for class struggles of different types (esp. pp. 327-331).

Where I would differ from Mann is not in the structure of his models, or most of them at any rate, but simply in his assumption that (leaving aside his ideological discussions) they are not materialist. I think that they are at least consistent with a materialist perspective. It is not true that political/military power floats free from the economy; it merely extracts from the economic base and intervenes in it at different levels from those operated by the producer. As I have said, Mann does not discuss this extractive process sufficiently; he seems to see 'the economy' as above all constituted by what Marx called the productive forces (and by circulation) rather than by the social relations of production, which he notices only in the arena of explicit class struggle. The millennia-long dance of hegemony and struggle between aristocrats/landowners and primary producers (and the precise, developing relationship between *this* pattern and that of state-backed extraction and economic advance), even though all these interacted with the development of the productive forces too, do not get proper, frontal attention. Because class structures are usually in these circumstances 'asymmetric', in Mann's nice phrase (i.e. landowners are more organized than peasants), it does not seem to him to be a historical 'motor'. If Mann had looked more at *peasants*, besides his well-described and well-documented interest in structures of domination *over* peasants, the material base of that domination would have been clearer. (Mann would not have been able to allow himself to skip the economic development of Europe between 1400 and 1700, either.) In a throwaway remark (p. 218) he says that 'minorities usually make history'. This is, precisely, false as a general statement about history; indeed, it only makes any sense at all in the framework of a traditional model of history as political action, and Mann's use of the phrase betrays some of his basic assumptions about historical processes. It is because of this perspective, it seems to me, that he can be happy with a model of social processes that denies ultimate causality to any of his power sources; from the perspective of the state, all three of the economy, ideology and the army appear, in part at least, as external forces, and it is unnecessary to enquire too closely into their origins. This is a procedure that can produce fertile results, and in Mann's hands it certainly does so; but there is nothing in either the empirical or the theoretical arguments in this book that has persuaded me that I was wrong to think that social formations (whether bounded or unbounded) are more tightly articulated than that. Mann's insights can nonetheless be taken on board by a Marxist historical project, precisely because of the analytical power and clear-sightedness of most of the book; differences in procedure aside, we are looking at the same material, and we have much to learn from him.

This is, as I have indicated from the start, an important book. But, I think, as I have also said, that it is not insignificant that it should appear at this precise point in the intellectual history of the twentieth century; this has been a decade when the intellectual self-confidence of Marxist historians has been severely shaken. This moment is naturally itself not unconnected with the political advance of the Right; but it is also in large part (in western Europe at least) the result of the inconclusive way in which structuralist Marxism, the most novel 'western Marxism' of the 1970s, has been absorbed into traditional Marxist history. Structuralist theory had a positive effect on many people, even historians, but its impact on history as a whole was largely negative; for its brief reign principally showed historians how difficult their subject was, and how many levels of analysis (discourse) it was necessary to operate on at once to get a properly articulated synthesis together. Furthermore, the complexities of structural articulation, as has been pointed out more than once, had a clearly functionalist element to them; although this in many respects added power to the models, it proved as a result excessively difficult to show how significant historical change could take place at all. When structuralism abruptly began to dissolve as a project in around 1980, it had only shown most historians how *not* to do their subject, not how to do it. This, I think, is one of the principal causes of the gap that has yawned in materialist history in the last few years, at least in the work of those young enough to be influenced by the structuralist debate; there are, at least, remarkably few Marxist historians who are currently going much beyond nuanced (and committed) empirical description. It is this gap that Mann and his fellow historical sociologists, focused on the LSE, are moving to fill, as, among other things, the recent symposium published as *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism* indicates.²⁰ This is no bad thing; if Marxists don't do it, someone has to, and better that it should be sociologists than most historians, such as those who are currently turning the English Civil War into the seventeenth-century equivalent of the Varsity match. But if Marxist analysis is to retain validity, then issues like the origins of capitalism in Europe (and its non-origins elsewhere) are precisely those that it has got to confront, and confront again, on the basis of new evidence, in each generation. Perry Anderson's third volume, on these and related issues, is fourteen years overdue; we await it with increasing impatience. But the rest of us have a responsibility as well; and here, if Mann and others like him can stimulate us into a modern materialist reworking of the issues he has posed, we may at least be able to begin to move forward in our understanding again. A new Marxist theory of the complexities of socio-economic change across the periods Mann describes will certainly end up having much to thank him for.

²⁰ Eds J. Beechler, J. A. Hall, M. Mann (Oxford 1988) Hall's own survey volume, *Power and Liberties*, Oxford 1983, is comparative in a way Mann's is not, but the comparisons do not entirely bite, for reasons similar to those discussed here. I am very grateful to Gregor McLennan, Gary Runciman and John Haldon for criticising the first draft of this article.

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Yuri Afanasyev on the 19th Conference of the CPSU

*I would like to start by asking for your impressions of the 19th Party Conference. What do you think has been achieved?**

That is a very large question, and it could take the best part of today to answer it alone. I shall try to summarize what impressed me the most, but please don't regard this as an exhaustive answer to your question. This was the first time since the twenties that all the vital problems facing the country were actually discussed by the representatives of the Party. Of course previous conferences did discuss certain problems, but none of them really got down to a proper discussion of the issues at stake. This time it did happen, and the situation of the country was seen in all its complexity. The importance of this fact should not be underestimated.

But although many problems were posed, it has to be said that there was no clarity as to solutions. This too was stated at the conference, which should be seen as a continuation of the surge of activity to find a solution to the outstanding problems that confront our society today. The Conference itself offered a model, and what we need is for all Party forums to confront problems in this way. The second striking feature was the unusual form of the conference. There were heated debates, explosions of emotion, sincerity, spontaneous speeches, genuine applause, and slow handclaps for those whom the delegates felt had nothing to say. The audience participation was amazing. The feel of the conference was of something alive, rather than the boredom and pomposity that has usually prevailed in recent decades.

What you describe sounds just like the twenties.

Yes, of course. But one has to go further and see what the problems were. We could start with the one which is the essence of our lives: the economy. There were very different approaches on this front. For instance, in Albakin's speech and in other interventions, it was difficult if not impossible to see any major changes in this field since the beginning of perestroika three years ago. Albakin emphasized the fact that the 11th Five-Year Plan period, which was during the years of

* This interview was conducted in Moscow in July 1988 by Tariq Ali, whose book *Revolution from Above. Where Is the Secret Union Going?* will be published in October by Century Hutchinson, London.

stagnation, still showed better results than the current 12th Five-Year Plan. When he shared his thoughts with us about why this was so, the reaction varied from one of support to strong opposition. Such a divergence of views is a positive phenomenon. However, I think that the reaction of many district executives of the Party manifested either an inability to look reality in the face, or a desire to avoid it. There was so much hostility to an independent thinking scientist. So I would say that the Conference both alarmed and delighted me.

For those of us watching the Conference preparations from afar, the most disturbing aspect was the way that the delegates were elected, or rather selected. What was positive, of course, was that the mass of Party members did not simply accept the fait accompli. There were protest meetings and demonstrations in Sakhalin and some towns in the Ukraine and Siberia, and your own students at this Institute protested very sharply at the decision of the Moscow Executive to disregard the overwhelming nominations in your favour. These protests were a healthy sign, but they cannot detract from the fundamental problem. The old principle was that delegates are elected by the party rank-and-file. How do you view all this?

I understand what you are saying, but the formal procedure is that delegates are elected by the regional and district plenums of the executive committees and not by the rank-and-file members. You can, of course, criticize this aspect of the Party constitution, but formally speaking the elections were conducted in accordance with this constitution. Moreover, I don't think you can have only one judgement on the outcome of the elections. You are quite right to stress the efforts of Party members and non-members to influence the procedure for nominating delegates at an early stage. This was not just restricted to Moscow but was a universal, and very positive, phenomenon. The whole demand for free elections is a concrete result of perestroika. Disagreement was openly expressed with some undemocratic decisions, but alongside all this there was a traditional bureaucratic approach. Throughout the pre-conference period, what we might call the pressure of the apparatus continued to exert itself—and this has to be sharply criticized. The self-promotion of functionaries was one of the most negative phenomena of the Conference. But there were also the lessons for democracy—the very first, elementary lessons for the broad masses as well as for members of the Party. We could say that these democratic lessons are the equivalent of entrance exams to junior school.

Let us now move on to the subject of history, with which you are directly concerned in your capacity as a Rector of this Institute and as someone who often speaks against any forbidden zones in this important discipline. Just to start, could you explain why history exams have been cancelled throughout the Soviet Union?

I think the answer is very simple, although the problem we confront is itself quite complex. The fact is that history textbooks in our country, especially those concerned with Soviet history, are completely falsified. They are not just falsifications in some aspects or minor details, but total falsifications. And to make teenagers repeat all these lies in the course of their exams is, quite frankly, immoral. Therefore we had no

other option. Naturally this is only a temporary measure, but I think it was necessary.

Are new textbooks being written?

Yes, some steps have been taken. Some people have been entrusted with this task—and there are special teams of authors. But here again there is something which I simply cannot accept, and I have expressed my disagreement on more than one occasion. I just think it is unfair, incorrect and counter-productive for the whole country simply to follow one textbook. This is a continuation of an authoritarian and monolithic approach in the field of pedagogy, based on the principle that you should know and learn only what you are given. Nothing more. Such an approach is completely negative and needs to be rejected. Not only should a wide selection of texts be available, but also a wide range of books, which may contradict one another. This is the only way to develop the critical faculties of our students. Both the teacher and the student must have a choice.

Of all the people involved in the debates on history you have been the most forthright in demanding justice for all the old Bolsheviks without exception. So far the process of glasnost has rehabilitated almost everyone: Bukharin, Zimoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Rakovsky, etc. Some have even been posthumously given back their party card. The question of Trotsky, however, remains unresolved. Why?

The question of Trotsky is a very special one in many respects—at least, this is my opinion. First, none of the Bolshevik old guard around Lenin played such a major role as Trotsky did in both the Revolution and the civil war that followed. Secondly, Trotsky was the only one of Lenin's old guard who openly criticized Stalin and Stalinism. Thirdly, Trotsky is part and parcel of the history of the International, especially with regard to a study and appraisal of Stalin's regime. In this respect too he is like no one else from the old guard. It is a special question because getting rid of the stereotypes of Trotsky is a measure of our success in ridding ourselves of the last vestiges of Stalinism. I am not a Trotskyist sympathizer, but I am in favour of an objective assessment of his role in our history. We should report comprehensively on his work and activities and have an open mind on the question. It is impossible to get rid of the Stalinist legacy without getting rid of the Stalinist stereotype of Trotsky. That is why I insist on objectivity and attach special importance to this issue. And that is why I call for Trotsky's rehabilitation.

Have you actually read Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution?

Yes—not in Russian but in French. All his major works were available to me in French. I think the History is also available in Russian, but it wasn't published here.

What is your view of it, speaking as a historian?

It is a noteworthy work and must be available along with other writings on the Revolution: Plekhanov, Sukhanov, Lenin, Martov and so on.

All these need to be read and evaluated. There are histories by the proponents and architects of the revolution and also by its opponents. There are histories which defend the October Revolution, and Trotsky's takes its place among them. Martov and Sukhanov are in a slightly different category. And then there are the outright opponents of October like Kerensky and Milyukov. All these different lines should be made available and judged on the basis of whether or not they correspond to logic and the facts.

Before his death in 1967 Isaac Deutscher expressed the hope on a number of occasions that his books would one day be published in the Soviet Union. With the advent of glasnost surely the time has now come? We read in the papers that Stephen Cohen's biography of Bukharin is going to be published any day. This is very good news, but surely the list should be extended?

You see, it is not I who make the decisions, so it is very difficult for me to answer these questions. Personally I think it is quite possible that Deutscher will be published one of these days. I know his works and must say that I think they are ideologically orientated. It is easier to publish non-Marxist historians because they aim at objectivity. Deutscher is ideologically and party-oriented. I don't see anything unnatural in this and I think his books should be published. His Trotskyist sympathies are very clear, but this could be explained in a publisher's statement.

He has, incidentally, been published in China.

Yes, well, I think his books are very interesting. They abound in facts and the interpretation of facts. They are very worthy books. There have been quite a lot of derogatory remarks about his works in the Soviet Union, and there was a time when we used to shape our thoughts on the basis of such remarks.

In 'The Unfinished Revolution'—a lecture series which he gave shortly before his death which, I have been told, has been translated into Russian and is in the library of the Central Committee—Deutscher predicted the emergence of a reform current inside the Communist Party.

I read the book a long time ago and don't remember everything in it. But I do recall that it produced a favourable impression on me. I must thank you for reminding me of it again.

I would like to ask you about the debate on pluralism. It is a very interesting debate because those of us who are socialists in the West know that it is quite possible to have three large parties which, though disagreeing about the pace of any social change, are united in keeping to the framework of capitalist society. So, to have more than one party doesn't necessarily mean a pluralism of ideas. This is especially true of the United States, where there are important tactical differences between the Republican and Democratic Parties but nothing fundamental or strategic divides the one from the other. Some of us on the Left follow very closely the debates inside the Soviet Union. The question is this: if you have a pluralism of ideas you can't legislate that it should stop there. Suppose things reach a stage where people who believe in certain ideas wish to organize around

them with like-minded people. Ideas rarely exist in isolation for ever. In 1918-19, because of the civil war, all Soviet parties were effectively banned, except for the ruling Bolshevik Party. At the time of the Tenth Party Conference in 1921 all the leaders of the Bolshevik Party stressed that the prohibition of tendencies and factions inside the party—in other words, the outlawing of dissent within the ranks of Bolshevism—was a temporary measure. Stalin was to utilize this ban to institutionalize authoritarianism in the country. As I see it, it was the banning of other Soviet parties such as the Left Mensheviks and the Left SRs which paved the way for barring pluralism inside the party itself. Now we can see the film being reversed. Surely if pluralism within the party leads to the emergence of other parties the heavens will not fall? Don't you think it is perfectly possible to accommodate other parties within the soviet system, and to move towards a form of democracy which is much more real in terms of mass participation than any existing capitalist democracy?

Well, I must say in the first place that I agree with you. For me what you have just said is perfectly acceptable. I have the same assessment as you do of the Tenth Party Conference. It was indeed in the spirit of a temporary measure that that resolution was passed. But the 'temporary measure' has now lasted from 1921 till 1988. It is impossible to regard this situation as normal. The party must not represent a monolith, because a monolith is totally inanimate, like a boulder. Of course differences of opinion are perfectly normal in a political party, and I think that at the present stage there is very great scope for the development of a pluralism of ideas even within the framework of a one-party system—provided that the party itself is radically transformed. What does this mean? It means that the party must abandon the commandist and administrative methods of rule and instead offer guidance through persuasion and participation. In other words, a party should lead not by the authority of its physical force, but through the force of its moral authority. That is what we are moving towards, and this is why the whole subject was much debated at the 19th Party Conference. Secondly, I believe that tendencies and factions should exist inside the party, which should represent a community of independent ideas. We should have different platforms articulating various political positions, and that's what will happen soon. It will be a healthy development so long as factions do not behave organizationally in a way that is contrary to the constitution. As to the presence of other organizations, it is already a fact. In Estonia there is the legally registered Popular Front for Perestroika, and there are more than a thousand unofficial groups in our country. They are part of the new political realities. On the eve of the 19th Party Conference I attended a conference of the independent, unofficial groups in Moscow. They had studied and discussed the Central Committee's theses for the Party Conference and had worked out their positions on them. I must say I was impressed by their seriousness. The Party has to see this as part of the growing process of democratization which has to be taken into account. It must not be ignored, nor should these groups be treated in a condescending fashion. I think that our life is beginning to develop in the way that you suggested, although perhaps not in such a clearcut fashion. There are still problems, and there still remain attitudes of hostility to the mass movement and its leaders. But things are moving in the right direction.

A fear is sometimes expressed both inside and outside the Soviet Union that in this critical time, given the balance of forces within the apparatus, they might remove Gorbachev and Yakovlev in much the same way that they dispensed with Khrushchev in 1964. Is this a possibility?

In my opinion, as of today, we do not have any guarantees. We can only have such guarantees if we have social and political institutions which provide the necessary safeguards. The democratization process, both in the party and in society, has a long way to go. At the moment we have just a sketch of the road that needs to be followed. Of course we have done many things. Glasnost is a reality today and represents a tremendous gain for the whole country. But we still have to revive the soviets, which have been lifeless up until now. Public and social organizations have to break from the old mould and begin to correspond to the needs of a democratic society. We have a great deal to do in order to build up the institutions which can guarantee soviet democracy. We must not get hung up on the personal qualities of the leadership. Of course we must rejoice that Gorbachev and Yakovlev do possess such qualities, but these alone are not enough to make the process of perestroika and democratization irreversible.

Many of us who remain socialists in the West are beginning to regard the Soviet Union once again as a country of hope. If you succeed, it could help in the rebirth of mass socialism elsewhere in the world. In that sense the fight for a socialist democracy is important not just for you but for the whole world.

I think that very many of us are well aware of this fact. For me it is obvious that Stalin and Stalinism have damaged the socialist project more than all the bourgeois ideologies in the world added together. Stalinism has discredited the idea of socialism. What will change things is not the quality of all our publications and our debates. It is change in life itself inside the USSR that will help socialism elsewhere in the world. Don't think we underestimate the difficulties confronted by socialist and workers' parties in the West, which had to fight for socialism when the model before them for the past few decades has been that of Brezhnev, Kunaev, and so on. I am aware of how much we have discredited socialism.

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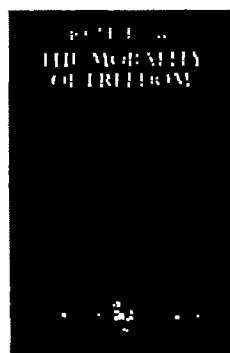
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Liberty, Equality, Community

It is widely believed that at some time over the last fifteen years the political values of the left were hijacked and the social theories of the left discredited; and that this intellectual reverse bears some relation to the ascendancy of Thatcherism. Whatever the merits of this case, four recent books make clear how much of the intellectual ground has been retrieved. If ideas count for anything, the right does not look that strong; not half so clever. Richard Norman's *Free and Equal* and John Baker's *Arguing for Equality* are mainly about political values. John Roemer's *Free to Lose* and Michael Taylor's *The Possibility of Cooperation* are also about social theories.¹ The four books share a concern for the institutional arrangements which would realize equality while respecting liberty. The books share something else which is no less significant for being a matter of style rather than content. It is something like a recovery of common sense and the idioms of dominant expression for the intellectual purposes of the left. Richard Norman begins by contrasting two traditions of political philosophy: the tradition which opposes freedom

to equality and the tradition which does not. Suppose, for example, that freedom is defined purely negatively, as the absence of constraint; that the only options of social organization are the State and the market, and that the State is identified as the only source of constraint. Then freedom will be maximized the more activities are taken from the unfree State and given to the free market. If the operation of the free market generates, or perpetuates, inequalities, then one must choose between freedom and equality. This is the kind of decision forced upon us in the first tradition of political philosophy, and it comes as no surprise that the political right tends to feel most comfortable in this tradition. Freedom is recommended as the primary value, with greater or lesser regret at the loss of equality which seems to be entailed thereby.

Richard Norman insists, and John Baker agrees, that freedom is not so easily counterposed to equality. The core idea of freedom is the idea of choice, and Norman proceeds to collect around this core idea those choice-promoting conditions which have sometimes gone under the headings of negative and positive liberty . . . 'how free one is will depend not just on one's being able to make choices at all, but on one's scope for choice—on the range of meaningful choices open to one. This range will be a matter both of what options are as a matter of fact available, and of one's subjective ability to envisage and assess alternatives. Consequently, the characteristic conditions of freedom include not only the negative conditions of not being coerced or restricted, but also certain positive conditions. These fall into the main categories of political conditions, material conditions and cultural conditions.'

The political conditions involve the practice of participatory democracy, the material conditions access to resources, and the cultural conditions access to goods which facilitate personal autonomy, 'such as education, knowledge, and understanding'. These conditions are connected with freedom characteristically rather than logically—that is, not in virtue of the definition of freedom but because of 'certain very basic facts about human beings and the nature of human action'.² If this is what freedom is, and what it characteristically requires, freedom is characteristically valued because of its connection with the exercise of the distinctively human faculties: perception, judgement, creativity. This is the experience which makes freedom a recurrently important political demand: freedom is required for that part of the fully human life whose vision John Mill shares with Karl Marx.

On this account of freedom, we have obviously come a long way from an identification of freedom with the market and unfreedom with the State. The evaluation of the institutional forms in terms of freedom now depends on how the market, say, or the State allocates political,

¹ Richard Norman, *Free and Equal. A Philosophical Examination of Political Values*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987; John Baker, *Arguing for Equality*, London, Verso, 1987; John Roemer, *Free to Lose. An Introduction to Marxist Economic Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, and London, Radnor Books, 1988; Michael Taylor *The Possibility of Cooperation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987. I should like to thank Jerry Cohen, Norman Geras, John Roemer and Michael Taylor for their critical commentary on an earlier draft of this paper.

² Norman, pp. 41, 49, 50.

material and cultural conditions: a matter for social theories rather than political values, strictly conceived.

Norman approaches equality from a slightly different angle, and perhaps less successfully. Just as the value of freedom is rooted in the experience of self-fulfilment, so the value of equality is given in our experience of that kind of cooperative community 'in which individuals freely participate and respect one another's freedom'. People entering cooperative community 'will be guided by egalitarian principles of justice: (a) that power should be shared equally and (b) that benefits and burdens should be so distributed that everyone benefits equally overall'.³ The egalitarian principles flow from the kind of commitment that cooperation is: cooperative action arises from the free decisions of its mutually respecting participants to engage in the common purpose which defines the scope of their cooperative action. (Perhaps Norman thinks free individuals would only agree to cooperate under conditions which made them equal.)

The reach of the ideal of equality is moreover limited by the extent of the implied agreement to cooperate: it is 'not a general moral ideal applicable to all human actions and interactions'. Wherever cooperative relations prevail, and the principles of equality therefore apply, equality has three conditions—or, rather, 'components'—which are: equality of power, equality of material goods and equality of access to culture. Perhaps it is no coincidence that these three components of equality are neatly aligned with the three conditions of liberty, for the alignment enables Norman to claim 'that freedom and equality, far from being opposed ideals, actually coincide'. For Norman, equality of (political) power is the most important element of both equality and freedom, and he returns a strong conclusion in his second tradition of political philosophy:⁴ 'Property rights may be outweighed if they are themselves a source of power and of control over the freedoms of others. The central thrust of an egalitarian policy, however, will not be the overriding of individual property rights but the establishing of a communal ownership and control of those institutions which constitute the basic structure of a society. To do this will be to found equality of wealth on equality of power.'

Does Freedom Coincide with Equality?

It is possible that Norman's equation of equality with liberty is too strong, and too quickly reached. Given the restricted social range of the equality principle, it is not clear why freedom requires global equality. Why not have a series of internally egalitarian islands of free individuals—a series of cooperative communities—standing unequally community to community, or an elite egalitarianism resting on mass oppression, such as Athenian democracy? There is nothing in Norman's concept of freedom to deny that the freedom an Athenian elite enjoy amongst themselves is authentic freedom, and there is something in his

³ Norman, pp 91, 73

⁴ Norman, pp 97, 133.

concept of equality which rather invites our acceptance of an Athenian arrangement as a genuine combination of freedom with equality.

In order to show that freedom overall is maximized where equality is global (this is, I suppose, what the coincidence of freedom and equality would mean), it would be necessary to add an argument of utilitarian flavour. Assume that the freedom-enhancing powers of the resources which Norman says enhance freedom show diminishing marginal returns. I always get more choice with more resources, but the extra amount of choice I get (or the value of the extra amount of choice I get) declines with the amount of the resource I already have. If interpersonal comparisons are allowed, and people are roughly equal in the way they convert resources into ranges of choice (perhaps this implies that their needs are roughly the same), then giving resources to the resource-poor will increase their freedom more than taking the resources from the resource-rich will decrease theirs. Hence global equality will maximize overall freedom, as equality ranges over all freedom-enhancing scarce resources.

It is a pity for the coherence of his full case that Norman rejects this kind of argument on pp. 64-5. The underlying problem is the exclusive connection he makes between the principle of equality and the practice of community, and the consequent neglect of the inequalities generated by the impersonal, long-range operations of State institutions and market forces.

Baker on Equality

No one could accuse John Baker of advancing a narrow concept of equality. For him, a commitment to universal, substantive equality follows almost immediately from some elementary propositions about human life and a basic sense of common decency: from the facts of human need, the principle of equal respect and the invariable requirement for some sense of belonging in the world: some semblance of community.

How well then, Mr Baker, does our, or any existing, society fare by these elementary standards?

Miserably badly.

But how much better should we do: don't some people deserve to get more than others?

I think social praise for special achievement is a useful and effective reward. Otherwise, I suppose some people might deserve special material compensation for particularly taxing or gruelling work; maybe twice as much pay as others with lighter jobs; certainly not twenty times as much. And it is totally obvious that people who typically get twenty times as much nowadays aren't the ones who typically work twice as hard, let alone twenty times as hard.

OK, but isn't inequality required as an incentive to elicit the exercise of special

talents—entrepreneurial ones perhaps—so that we have to live with inequality even if it's not strictly fair?

I think the incentive requirement is grossly overestimated—people don't seem to need large inducements to do overtime, for example. But maybe in an extreme case one might pay up to, say, twice as much, but never twenty times as much. It also seems to present talented people as distinctly sulky if they have to be paid enormous sums of money to do things one would expect them to enjoy doing anyway. Surely a talent is there to be exercised, given the opportunity.

What about equality of opportunity then? Isn't that a more practical goal than the extremism of your recommendations?

It may or may not be more practical, and within its limits it's obviously desirable in order to eliminate the gross forms of sexual and racial discrimination. But none of the five versions of it has anything much to do with equality. Not only does equal opportunity mean an equal opportunity to become unacceptably unequal, but the whole rationale for the principle would more or less collapse if there were an acceptable type of substantive equality.

OK, I take the point, John, but we all know there are an awful lot of rather poor people and only very few really wealthy people: would it make much difference to redistribute the available resources; isn't this at bottom the politics of spite, and aren't all our lives made more colourful by the eccentricities of privilege?

As a matter of fact, straight redistribution would do rather a lot for the situation of the poor: it would triple the income of the poorest five million people in Britain, for example. There is also the issue of justice to consider along with the far-reaching consequences of 'the layers of contempt found in our society . . . created by its hierarchies of power and wealth'. Anyway, 'an egalitarian society wouldn't prevent people from becoming pop stars, but it would limit their incomes. People would be free to develop their skills in medicine, law, finance or management, but they wouldn't be able to use these skills to make a fortune.'⁵ And why on earth should so many people now be denied the possibilities for themselves that they contemplate from afar in the overreported antics of new wealth and old?

All very well, John, but what about the dead hand of bureaucracy?

'Many of the worst excesses of supposedly egalitarian bureaucracies, such as social welfare anoozers and complicated and obscure rules for grants and allowances, derive not from their egalitarianism but from the limits placed on them by an unequal society. The bureaucrats are there to make sure that the poor don't get too much—where "too much" is far less than equality would demand.'⁶

But surely you've overlooked the crunch issue: the kind of levelling social monstrosity

⁵ Baker, pp. 32, 76.

⁶ Baker, p. 9

you seem to believe in would be totally unfree. Wouldn't the Handicapper-General be there to stifle initiative and force us all to be the same: mere clones of some demented planner's will?

This is simply a travesty of what egalitarians believe. The whole point of eliminating the larger social divisions of power, wealth and social class, and the consequences of entrenched inequalities of gender and race, is not to eliminate but to promote personal difference and variety: to create the conditions for a satisfying, fulfilling life for all. And how dare they go on about freedom! I'm surprised the word doesn't choke in their gullets. Can 'the freedom enjoyed by the owners and controllers of capital . . . be justified in terms of freedom itself? How could anyone honestly say so, when it is responsible for such a gross lack of freedom on the part of others? How could anyone think that the freedom of a tiny minority to control the means of production is more important than the freedom of far greater numbers of people to choose interesting and worthwhile careers, to have control over their working lives, to have enough money to exercise real choice over what they buy? Capitalist property rights are not an issue of freedom versus equality, but of freedom for a few versus freedom for everyone. For anybody who really cares about freedom, the choice must be obvious.'⁷ I think John Baker's namesake should be required by law to post this notice in every classroom in the land.

Arguing for Equality is uncluttered, eloquent, decisive. It is a low-fuss, high-impact book, dedicated to the absurd proposition that a good argument in plain speech is worth more than a factitious display of academic expertise.

The only anti-egalitarian argument John Baker takes at all seriously is the Rawlsian type of 'benefit-all' argument: that some inequalities are admissible where they genuinely redound to the benefit of the worst-off. But he brings to bear some fairly elementary empirical considerations to show that this is unlikely to represent any major concession to the scale of inequality that now exists: contemporary capitalism just cannot be defended in this way.

The conception of equality he advances runs broader and cuts deeper than Richard Norman's. He does not tie it to a particular type of social relationship, though he shares with Norman the sense of connection between equality and community. They share also a slight impatience with what might be called the philosophical aspect of political philosophy; the obsession with building an absolutely watertight logical system of concepts and applications, rather than treating political ideas more as they arise from characteristic experiences of life (Norman) or from the everyday run of political argument (Baker). The outwardness of this outlook is refreshing.

Both are concerned, too, with institutions, but neither is here writing as a social theorist, and their impatience perhaps overlooks the point that good social theory—even good political philosophy—sometimes

⁷ Baker, p. 80

requires abstraction, model-building and recourse to formal tools. This, at any rate, is the lesson to be learned in different ways from John Roemer and Michael Taylor.

A Unified Marxist Theory

John Roemer's new book *Free to Lose* is, I guess, the textbook of contemporary Marxist theory. In it, Roemer accomplishes three main tasks. First, he brings down from the mathematical stratosphere his existing work on the labour theory of value, social class and exploitation. Second, he includes a long discussion of G.A. Cohen's version of the theory of history, with a summary too of Robert Brenner's work on the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Taken together, these concerns cover the first nine chapters of the book and the full range of Marxist social and economic theory. My admiration of John Roemer's work will be known from a previous issue of NLR.⁸ It is, if possible, extended by this publication, subject to just two reservations.

The first reservation concerns the treatment of the theory of history. In Cohen's reconstruction we have the most coherent statement of what that theory is. In Brenner's historiography we have the most systematic presentation of the evidence in the case which is the acid test for the truth of the whole theory. And yet, as Roemer recognizes, the two statements are in standing contradiction: for Cohen, productive forces are primary; for Brenner, class struggle. I would expect Roemer to compare the two accounts rather closely, but he says merely (against Brenner) that 'a few centuries' difference in the development of capitalism in different parts of Europe—the result of differing balances of class forces in regions—is not a significant period of time in human history and that [Brenner's] evidence therefore does not contradict Cohen's traditional reading of historical materialism.⁹

Perhaps not, in principle, but a theory of history might still be thought wanting that refuses to engage with the facts at intervals shorter than hundreds of years, even if the hundreds are few. The point is important because the promise of a unified Marxist theory depends on the resolution of the issues between Cohen and Brenner, not least because Cohen's theory of history employs functional explanation, whereas Brenner's theory of feudalism employs rational-choice explanation consistent in principle with the types of rational-choice explanation Roemer himself deploys with such devastating effect in his work on capitalism, social class and exploitation. It looks, in other words, as if Roemer is putting forward 'Cohen on history plus Roemer on class and exploitation' as standard contemporary Marxism, whereas 'Brenner on history plus Roemer on class and exploitation' is at first sight methodologically more consistent, at the cost of depriving Marxism of the support it traditionally thought it enjoyed from the theory of history. I will not pursue this problem here, just register it as unresolved by Roemer's book.

⁸ 'Rational Choice Marxism', *New Left Review* 160, 1986

⁹ Roemer, p. 123.

The gist of Roemer's social theory is that under a wide range of circumstances unequal resource distribution implies unequal exchange between rational individuals. Wherever full private property and markets are involved, the theory says, free trade exacerbates inequality. This is why Friedman's *Free to Choose* becomes Roemer's *Free to Lose*. The inequality in the exchange is measured either by the difference between the labour contribution and the labour content of the return to the contribution, or under a more general concept of welfare the difference in utilities, or payoffs, among individuals (or coalitions) found when comparing inequalitarian with egalitarian arrangements of property in resources. The first kind of measurement obviously bears a family resemblance to the classical Marxist conception of value, although it does not require a labour *theory* of value, because it is necessary only that the labour content of goods and contributions be calculable, not that goods exchange in ratios proportional to their labour content.

The major kinds of market-induced unequal exchange exist in the labour market between capitalists and proletarians; in the credit market between creditors and debtors; and in the market for produced goods between the capital-intensive and the labour-intensive producers, or between the skilled and the unskilled producers. Outside the market, there is feudal unequal exchange which results from an inequality of ownership of labour-power—unfree serfs (or slaves) do not own some (or all) of their 'own' labour-power—and status unequal exchange resulting from unequal access to bureaucratic position.

Resource Injustice or Transaction Injustice?

In the previous paragraphs, I have used the term 'unequal exchange' for what Roemer consistently calls 'exploitation'. In his technical usage, the term 'exploitation' is quite disconnected from political values. Exploitation does not have to be unfair or unjust, as is clear from the following: 'If the initial distribution is highly unequal because some agents robbed and plundered, then clearly there are grounds for viewing the ensuing exploitation as bad.'¹⁰ The last phrase implies that exploitation could be good. In particular, it would be good if the initial distribution, though unequal, had come about in a way that was not unfair—for example, if it had come about through honest toil rather than robbery and plunder.

This is the general position that Roemer argues very strongly in his new book—indeed, it enjoys a much more prominent place in this new synopsis than in his preceding work taken as a whole. The causal story is that unequal resource distribution leads to unequal exchange, called exploitation, and the moral story is that exploitation is unjust if and only if the unequal resource distribution which causes exploitation is unjust.¹¹

¹⁰ Roemer, p. 38.

¹¹ For an explicit statement of 'When exploitation is an injustice, it is not because it is exploitation as such, but because the distribution of labour expended and income received in an exploitative situation are consequences of an initial distribution of assets that is unjust', Roemer, p. 37.

I think this position involves an unhappy usage and a substantive misconception, and these thoughts compose my second reservation with the book. The unhappy usage is the possibility of just exploitation. When most Marxists, or feminists (or most anyone) use the term exploitation in a political context, I don't think they usually feel the need to add an argument to the effect that exploitation is a bad thing. I know there are Marxists who think, and/or think that Marx thought, that the use of the term exploitation can never imply a concern with justice, because they, or Marx, have no concern with such a bourgeois value as justice, but Roemer cannot be counted among these, because he does have an abiding concern with justice. He is surely almost alone in thinking that politically relevant exploitation is sometimes just and sometimes unjust. Roemer's technical usage is potentially misleading, because there are some kinds of technical exploitation which he would not want to change, and yet when most people talk of exploitation they talk of things they would definitely prefer to be different. Why not simply use the term 'unequal exchange' for the facts consequent upon unequal resource distribution, and reserve the term 'exploitation' for the kind of unequal exchange that is also unjust, becoming thereby a fit object of political concern?

Under this amendment, Roemer's substantive position is expressed in the formula that unequal exchange is exploitative if and only if the unequal resource distribution responsible for unequal exchange is an unjust distribution. It now becomes clearer why Roemer rather surprisingly regards 'exploitation' as a concept lacking political interest in its own right, because unjust unequal exchange is secondary to unjust unequal resource distribution from both the causal and the moral points of view. But I think Roemer is wrong to think this, because moral interest is properly directed at the inequality of the exchange transaction independently of the inequality of resource distribution giving rise to the unequal transaction.

Recall John Baker's pop stars and their unusual abilities. Is it wrong that they have these abilities? Perhaps, John Roemer might say, there are circumstances in their personal backgrounds which unjustly give them a head start in show business—say, their Daddies were all Rolling Stones. But perhaps not: perhaps their success is due to raw talent—and is this question in any case relevant? What might be wrong is not that a person has a talent, but the uses they make of the talent—the kind or scale of reward they are able to elicit from their possession of this scarce resource. Now there are, of course, many different views about what kinds or scales of reward are just—the persuasive Baker line being that only modest inequalities of reward at most are just. But the point is that the argument about justice is an argument primarily about the justice of talent use and not the justice of talent possession. And I think a parallel point applies to property in alienable resources as well as talents and skills. What marks out 'exploitation' as a concept is, on the one hand, the causal element showing how the benefits of some depend on the burdens of others (unequal exchange) and on the other hand, the normative element showing why certain usages of a superior position are abuses of that position.

Exploitation is, I think, a privileged concept in egalitarian politics for two main reasons. First, the causal element rules out 'the politics of envy and spite' by picking out just those inequalities in which some do better because others do worse. Second, the moral element will serve as a regulative ideal in a society run according to a non-exploitative ethic, tending to maintain equality by restricting unjustly unequal transactions. It is not just a question of getting a society off to the right start by securing a just initial distribution of resources. There is a problem of keeping it on the right track. I think that this point is recognized implicitly in the last part of Roemer's book, which is consequently in some tension with the first part of the book.

Who's Afraid of Robert Nozick?

One of the reasons, I suspect, that Roemer wants to trace injustice right back to the initial distribution of resources is the worry induced by Nozick's polemics from the libertarian right of the consequences for freedom of restraining either transactions or outcomes within some rather rigid mould. But as Baker and Norman (and Taylor and Cohen before them) are correct to insist, *any* regime of property rights, any institutional form, any system of social norms allocating resources, regulates use as well as possession, and distributes its unfreedoms along with its freedoms. We can compare systems of property for their amounts and distributions of freedoms, but we are never in a position to compare free systems with unfree systems. It is also worth noting that the application of typical socialist values—say, a social ethic of non-exploitation—is fully compatible in principle with Nozick's historical entitlement views of property. Norman quotes Nozick as follows: 'A distribution is just if it arises from another just distribution by legitimate means. The legitimate means of moving from one distribution to another are specified by the principle of justice in transfer.'¹² As Norman comments, Nozick seems to equate a just transfer with a voluntary transfer. If one accepts the equation, then the only possible source of injustice in Roemerian unequal exchange is indeed the initial resource distribution, since the relevant transfers are all voluntary (at least in free market exchange). But one need not accept this equation.

A voluntary unequal exchange may be considered unjust, for example, if it violates the needs-contribution principle.¹³ Exploitative transfers would then result in Nozickian unfair outcomes even if the original

¹² Norman, p. 145, n. 8.

¹³ It might be said that voluntary exchanges always satisfy the needs-contribution principle, because the amount that is given in either direction is a measure of how much the giver's contribution is worth to the satisfaction of the receiver's need. On this basis, the Samaritan who successfully charges £20,000 to phone for an ambulance is doing good because calling an ambulance must be worth that much to anyone needing an ambulance so desperately. This kind of needs-contribution principle is not going to give any independent purchase on the justice of exchange, and so I am happy to have in mind a needs-contribution principle which depends on criteria of value different from the facts of payment, just as I am unhappy with Steiner's conclusion that the free enterprise Samaritan would only be exploiting the helplessness of the stricken Wayfarer if the Samaritan crippled all other potential helpers (or otherwise infringed the rights of third parties). Hillel Steiner, 'Exploitation: a Liberal Theory Amended, Defended and Extended', in Andrew Reeve, ed., *Modern Theories of Exploitation*, London 1987, p. 144.

resource distribution was fair. (I also think, *contra* Roemer (p. 173), that this was Marx and Engels' position, as set out in *Capital*, 1, ch. 24.)

Now it is, of course, true that the range of justified transactions would be narrower under the no-exploitation rule than under the rule allowing all voluntary transfers. Capitalist acts between consenting adults would certainly be frowned upon. It might appear that in these circumstances the freedom of everyone would be restricted, because the freedom of a person to be exploited if they wanted to would be restricted, along with the freedom of others to exploit them. But it is not actually obvious that freedom overall is reduced, so that a choice between freedom and equality is forced, for the general reason sketched above that a non-exploitative transfer (or perhaps an almost non-exploitative transfer leaving the person in a superior resource position some incentive to exchange) will tend to a more equal outcome than an exploitative one, and the person who will gain, relatively speaking, will be the person in the worse initial situation for whom the extra resources generate greater comparative freedom. In sum, Roemer's treatment of justice in the body of the book seems a little more wary than need be of the right-wing libertarian position.

What Is Public Ownership?

This impression is confirmed by the last chapter of the book—on Public Ownership. Although some of its themes are foreshadowed in Roemer's earlier work on needs exploitation, the argument is essentially new, and totally original. It represents the first fruits of a rather awe-inspiring direct confrontation between Cohen's philosophy and Roemer's mathematics.

Roemer addresses himself to the question of how one might implement the partial egalitarianism Cohen has been exploring in several writings directed against Nozick. The point of partial egalitarianism is to see how far it might be possible to combine the more appealing liberal demand of self-ownership (including in the self the skills and talents a person possesses at birth or acquires by experience) with the more appealing socialist demand for joint (collective) ownership of the external world. Ownership here is a moral concept: it implies rights of some kind to the income streams or other benefits stemming from the use of resources. People have 'public' rights in virtue of their sharing to some degree in all the resources of the external world. They have 'private' rights in virtue of their exclusive claim to their own persons, and their personal abilities. The public rights tend to be egalitarian, and passive, rewarding people just for being around. The private rights tend to be libertarian, and active, rewarding people for doing something with or by themselves. Evidently, a certain combination is being proposed of equality with liberty.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cohen does not advocate the proposal as such. He has drawn my attention to his claim that '[because they are] egalitarians, Marxists must, in the end, abandon their flirtation with self-ownership: a combination of self-ownership and equality of worldly resources will not supply what Marxists demand' 'Self-Ownership, World Ownership, and Equality: Part II', in Ellen F. Paul et al., eds, *Marxism and Liberalism*, Oxford 1986, p. 80.

Roemer does not pretend to know exactly what these rights are, or what institutions would respect them. (As he points out, there is much less clarity about what public ownership of the external world means than about what private ownership of the external world means.) He takes an even less direct line than Norman and Baker when they discuss the implementation of liberty with equality. He asks instead what minimal general principles of distribution any institution should possess which could reasonably be said to implement 'internal' self-ownership with 'external' public ownership. These minimal general principles frame an 'economic constitution', which any social allocation mechanism (any set of rights, social norms or social institutions) must obey.

Arrow's Axiomatics

The ancestry of this new, axiomatic approach lies in Kenneth Arrow's work. Arrow asked whether it was possible to have a social decision-making procedure which always respected a democratic 'political constitution' consisting of four minimal principles. The principles were: (i) Unrestricted preference-ordering over alternatives (ie. no social constraint on tastes); (ii) Pareto Optimality (if no one opposes a decision, and some person(s) support it, then it is the social decision); (iii) Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (the social decision between two alternatives depends only on the individual preferences between those two alternatives); (iv) Non-Dictatorship (the social decision doesn't simply reproduce the preference schedule of a particular individual).

Arrow's celebrated answer—his Impossibility Theorem—was that no decision-making procedure is capable of always transforming individual preference schedules into a democratic social decision, if what is meant by a 'democratic decision' is one reached in a manner consonant with the four principles of the democratic 'political constitution'. Arrow's result has generated almost forty years of continuous discussion—and its own sub-discipline of social choice theory.

Five Axioms of Public Provision in a Free Society

In the spirit of Arrow's theorem, Roemer asks what economic allocation mechanism will implement a combination of 'private' self-ownership with 'public' external ownership, if the combination implies the following five principles: 1. *Pareto Optimality*: society will not allocate resources so that everyone is worse off than they need be. 2. *Land Monotonicity*: no one in the society does worse when the amount of land (read natural resources) increases. 3. *Technological Monotonicity*: no one does worse when the technology (read productivity) improves. 4. *Limited Self-Ownership*: the more skilled (or talented) people never do worse than the less skilled (or talented) people. 5. *Protection of Infirm*: the less skilled (or talented) people never do worse in a society containing people with higher skills or talents than they would do in a society with people of like skills (or talents) to their own.

Pareto Optimality expresses an efficiency requirement of the economy.

The second and third principles express a (mild) form of public ownership: if our external resources improve, then no one should suffer on that account. The fourth, self-ownership principle somewhat protects the rights of the more able to the fruits of their abilities. No one should be punished for having greater ability. Regarding the final axiom, Roemer 'is not sure whether [Protection of Infirm] represents a property right of public ownership of the external world or of self-ownership. It is, in any case, an axiom for an economic constitution that has independent appeal. The axiom does not commit [the more able called Able] to sharing the fruits of his relative advantage over [the more needy called Infirm]; it only requires that Infirm not suffer by virtue of Able's superior skill.'¹⁵

It seems clear that this set of principles attempts to formalize at a highly abstract level the performance of a social system in which: (a) Capitalist exploitation has been eliminated because the 'privatization' of the benefits derived from 'land' or 'technology' is at the root of capitalist exploitation and privatization is excluded by Axioms 2 and 3. (Nothing is said directly in 2 and 3 about *equal* rights in the external world but 2, 3 and 4 together imply equal rights—i.e. a right to an equal share.) (b) Socialist exploitation has been eliminated, or at least mitigated, because Protection of Infirm prevents Infirm being worse off as a result of Able being better off in at least one set of counterfactual circumstances. (c) There is some attempt to implement a version of the needs-contribution principle of reward, because Limited Self-Ownership allows differential returns to one kind of skill contribution and both the Public Ownership axioms and Protection of Infirm rest part of their appeal on a principle of equal respect for persons, when their personal needs are regarded as respectively equal and unequal.

Roemer vs. Roemer

I am largely persuaded that this set of axioms departs from Roemer's assumption earlier in the book that an outcome is unjust if and only if the initial resource distribution is unjust. The proposed economic constitution clearly embodies a certain conception of justice. According to Roemer's earlier position, conceptions of justice impinge only on the initial distribution of resources, and are not allowed to tell independently against transactions or outcomes. Can this be the case with the proposed economic constitution?

It is true that some kinds of initial resource allocation are ruled out under the constitution—above all, unequal, exclusive private property in the external world—in a way incidentally that does not enquire whether or not the inequality came about from robbery and plunder. But it seems clear that some kinds of *transaction* are also being excluded on constitutional grounds. Nothing in the axioms suggests it is wrong for Able to be able, and yet Able is not enabled to disable the less able—to take advantage of the differential ability. This must surely be because Able is not allowed to make certain transactions with Infirm.

¹⁵ Roemer, p. 164

This point bears two interpretations, depending on whether or not the rights to make certain transactions are regarded as built in to the initial distribution of resources (roughly, whether the term 'distribution of resources' refers to a distribution of possession of resources or a distribution of ownership of resources, where ownership confers distinctive rights of use in addition to rights of possession). Thus, if the distribution of resources refers to possession, the inequality between Able and Infirm consists in the fact that it is Able and not Infirm who is the one with the ability Able has. If we assume this is a natural ability, which could not possibly be distributed differently (because it cannot have been anyone else who was born with the ability with which Able was born) then the inequality is in no way unjust (ought implies can, so cannot implies ought not). If the initial inequality of possession is just, yet injustice results from possession, the blame must lie with some unjustified subsequent use of what is initially held with justice. Roemer's formula would be falsified because final injustice would occur without initial injustice, such as would be the case if I deserved my leg, but you don't deserve to be kicked with it.

On the second interpretation, which regards the initial distribution as a distribution of ownership, Roemer's formula is preserved. In this interpretation, self-ownership confers on each self rights not only to possess whatever abilities the self possesses, but to enjoy a wide range of benefits from the use of those abilities. (The range is never unlimited: I have a right maybe to use whatever native ability I have with numbers to earn as much as I can as an accountant, but no rights to use the same ability to fiddle the accounts.) If able activities licensed by the initial distribution of ownership of abilities lead to outcomes which violate the economic constitution, then one can infer that the injustice lies in the amount or type of licence granted by ownership, and since this licence has been assimilated to the initial situation as part of the concept of ownership, then technically the injustice responsible for the injustice in the outcome may be found in the initial distribution, and Roemer's formula is upheld. I concede that this second interpretation is possible, but I do not regard it as the most natural, and it can be positively misleading if the distinction between rights to possession and rights of use is overlooked. The danger is that the compelling argument for the justice of possession of our natural abilities appears to be an argument for the justice of almost unlimited rewards from their use.¹⁶

Roemer also reports that the solution known as People's Capitalism, which equalizes private property in external resources to begin with and then lets the market rip, violates Axioms 2, 3 and 5. This is presumably because the possession of private property in conjunction with superior skill will lead to unequal exchange between Able and Infirm and a violation of Axiom 5, even when the external resource

¹⁶ The second interpretation reflects my understanding of an objection from Jerry Cohen to the first interpretation. It is not as clear for acquired abilities as it is for their natural cousins that possession is always just, since any abilities I have acquired might have been acquired instead by you, and injustice might attend the acquisition. And since natural abilities cannot be set to use except in the context of acquired abilities and other resources of social origin the scope for just rewards based solely on the justice of natural talent possession is likely to be extremely limited.

distribution is initially equal, and because the dynamic construal of Axioms 2 and 3 rules out the 'privatization' of benefits possible when the economy expands (in natural resources or productivity) even if the starting point involves equal rights in the form of exclusive private rights over equal amounts of the initial resources. This last result seems to extend Roemer's previous work, because it suggests that it is the institution of private property, and not just the unequal distribution of property under the institution which is at fault. Also, if we couple the more natural interpretation of the unequal initial distribution of abilities with the thought that there are few grounds for the injustice of equal division of external resources, then the whole initial layout of People's Capitalism is just. Yet People's Capitalism violates the economic constitution, so the injustice must lie in what occurs subsequent to the initial distribution of property—viz: the free market exchange transactions which arise in an expanding economy beginning with the equal initial distribution of external resources. Hence it is not the case under the proposed constitution that the distributive outcome is unjust only if the initial distribution of resources is unjust.

How Equal Is Liberal Socialism?

Under the five axioms, resources are being somewhat equalized, and transactions somewhat restricted. How much? At first sight, one would imagine that the answer corresponds roughly to John Baker's vision of an egalitarian society, so that his good arguments for egalitarianism count as good arguments for these axioms. Public Ownership will eliminate the grosser inequalities of capitalist wealth; Limited Self-Ownership will allow income differentials to exist and Protection of Infirm will imply a mildish Welfare State. There will be a range of inequality—substantial from some points of view but bounded above and below, and much less extreme than now exists.

Roemer's remarkable new result is that this plausible initial picture is mistaken. Under some restrictions on the production functions in the economy, and the utility functions of agents, there is only one way to implement this economic constitution: perfect egalitarianism. This is, one might say, A Necessity Theorem. From the infinite number of schemes of reward that might implement the constitution, there is only one in fact that will. This is the scheme in which the economy performs efficiently at the Pareto frontier, and the rewards (and welfare) of everyone in the society are exactly the same.

Does Freedom Conflict with Equality?

The implication of the Theorem is that 'public property rights in the external world trump private ownership of skills'.¹⁷ Even a relatively mild claim by everyone to benefit in some respects (in fact, not to be harmed) from the enhancement of external resources is sufficient in conjunction with the other axioms to mandate universal substantive equality. Does this, ironically, force the choice between freedom and equality which the radical tradition has always wanted to refuse?

¹⁷ Roemer, p. 168.

It does, if freedom means something stronger than limited self-ownership. The Theorem says that one cannot at the same time have: (i) Efficiency, (ii) Some claim of everyone upon all the external resources in the world, (iii) The non-exploitation of the less able, (iv) Sufficient freedom to guarantee welfare differentials in favour of the more able. Liberals will reject (ii) in favour of exclusive, private property in external resources, inaugurating a society in which there will almost certainly be immediate or eventual exploitation of the poor by the rich and the infirm by the able. Socialists will reject (iv), which involves a strong notion of self-ownership, and are subsequently bound to be strict egalitarians even though they have attempted to meet liberalism halfway by adopting the principle of limited self-ownership. The socialist package will certainly restrict the freedom of the more able along with the freedoms of any who would enjoy the exploitative potential of private property under the free market regime. How much freedom differs under the socialist compared with the liberal regime will depend on several factors: first, on how much freedom is implied by limited compared with strong self-ownership; second, on how much freedom is generated by the public access to resources guaranteed under socialism and denied under liberalism; third, how these varied distributions of freedoms with unfreedoms are aggregated.

In all likelihood, socialism increases freedom—that is, *individual* freedom—in virtue of enhanced rights for most people over external resources and the fruits of the abilities of others and it decreases freedom in virtue of restricted rights of (?) most people over the material gains from the exercise of their own talents. This implication of the Theorem for freedom must be qualified in two respects. First, the Theorem is doubly removed from reality: it is not even about idealized, or stylized institutions, such as the Weberian ideal-typical State, the neo-classical perfect market or the Norman free community. It is about the ideal principles which ideal institutions might respect. Without even ideal institutional specification, it is not very clear what the rights enshrined in the economic constitution would imply for practice, and therefore how much practical freedom they would underwrite. Second, Roemer's theorem has implications for freedom principally in its connection with Norman's material conditions of positive liberty: the distribution of scarce material resources. The model of the theorem says very little about the negative and positive political conditions (e.g. the balance of coercion between socialism and liberalism and the extent of participatory democracy). It says nothing about the cultural conditions. But having said all that, the Theorem clarifies considerably the political choices to be made. If strong self-ownership is what you want from freedom, then you cannot have your libertarian cake and eat your egalitarian outcome. But strong self-ownership is not obviously desirable in itself, and the inequalities to which it leads will hamper freedoms of some other kinds.

The Politics of Feasible Anarchism

Whatever public ownership means, it must imply that all the members of a relevant public have some claim to benefit from the resource they jointly own. If the resource is thus a public good, and there are burdens in providing the resource, each member of the public is free to enjoy

and will self-interestedly want to enjoy the benefit of access to the resource without incurring the burden of helping to provide it. But if no one has any incentive to provide the resource, then either the resource will not come into being or, if the resource exists already and is subject to deterioration in use, no one will make any effort to restore or reproduce its beneficial properties. Either way, the resource will fail to exist. Yet we may each be worse off without the resource than we would be doing our share to provide it as a public good for the use of ourselves and everyone else.

This type of problem, called the Prisoner's Dilemma from the example which introduced it to the modern literature, is assumed away in Roemer's axiomatic treatment of public ownership. The Dilemma consists precisely in the fact that rational individual action leads to an outcome—no public provision—which is worse for everyone than public provision. In jargon, the outcome is a Pareto inferior one, in violation of the Pareto Optimality Axiom. Roemer has in effect, and quite reasonably for his purposes, assumed that people can collectively overcome the Prisoner's Dilemma.

How could they have done so? There are two standard answers to this question, which can be called Norman's answer and Hobbes's answer. Norman's answer, as we have seen, is that free people would agree under these circumstances to collaborate to produce and enjoy the public good, taking an equal share in the work of providing it. They would agree to form a cooperative community. The problem, though, is that these free cooperators retain an incentive to break the cooperative agreement it is in their interest to make. (The air of paradox is dispersed by thinking that what each person really wants is for everyone but themselves to abide by the cooperative agreement.) Norman's solution therefore relies on norms. People are no longer wholly self-interested; they are assumed to be sufficiently moral to abide by their interest-oriented agreements.

Hobbes's apparently normless solution holds that the people agree to vest power in an external deterrent force—alias the Sovereign—which will reliably punish people who rat on their agreements just enough to ensure that people will prefer not to rat on their agreements. Under the watchful eye of the Sovereign, people will cooperate to produce public goods when it is in their interests to do so. The beauty of this solution, in theory at least, is that the Sovereign never has to do anything. The deterrent value of the State presence is sufficient to make cooperation rational. Pradeep Bandyopadhyay has recently argued persuasively that it is this structural condition in the public provision of goods rather than the undeniable contingencies of history which explains why the State in actually existing socialism shows so little sign of withering away.¹⁸

Michael Taylor is unhappy with both Norman's and Hobbes's solutions to the problem of public goods provision, and his long-standing theoretical project has been the search for middle ground between these two

¹⁸ Pradeep Bandyopadhyay, 'The State in Socialist Society'

solutions. As an Anarchist, he wants to deny that the State is necessary for the achievement of cooperation and, like Norman, he favours the community as an alternative to the State. Also, as he points out, Hobbes's solution is no kind of solution at all, since the deterrent effect is itself a public good. Just as we each have an interest in others being deterred from reneging on their agreements to cooperate, so each of us has an interest in not paying our share of the taxes that sustain the arrangements which deter others from reneging. Hobbes's solution to the Prisoners' Dilemma presupposes the solution to another Prisoner's Dilemma.¹⁹

But Taylor is in other respects like Hobbes, and unlike Norman, many Anarchists, quite a few Utopian Socialists and Marx in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*. He does not want to rest the possibility of cooperation on a transformation of human nature so profound that people never yield to the temptations of back-sliding on their agreements; or a transformation of social conditions so profound that all contributions to the common good become sheer joy and pleasure.

The Possibility of Cooperation

The solution he offers in *The Possibility of Cooperation* refurbishes the argument originally made out in his 1976 *Anarchy and Cooperation*. The current republication is particularly welcome because it should make clearer to a wide audience what is the most important source of the ideas made fashionable more recently and crudely in Robert Axelrod's *Evolution of Cooperation*.²⁰ The nub is to regard the insoluble Prisoner's Dilemma as one member of a sequence of similar games played out into an indefinite future with decreasing payoffs. Each of us has an interest in what we will get in the future, but this is not quite as pressing as the interest each of us has in the here and now. In this frame of reference, corresponding to what is called an *iterated* or *supergame*, the choice is less stark between once-for-all cooperation (which risks being taken for a ride by other people's non-cooperation) and once-for-all non-cooperation (which risks losing the mutual advantages of cooperation). People can now indulge in conditional cooperation. Instead of 'Shall I; Shan't I do my share?', the spirit is rather 'I shall do my share for the time being and expect you to do yours. But if you dare rat out on me; I, too, reserve the right to rat.'

Conditional cooperators are less vulnerable than unconditional cooperators, because they need not so long suffer being taken for a ride. But the lesser vulnerability of cooperation implies the lesser attractiveness of non-cooperation, for would-be free riders will pretty soon find no public good exists on which to ride. If all of this can be foreseen, and each of us values future payoffs sufficiently in relation to the current incentive each of us retains to take advantage of our fellows, then long-

¹⁹ Taylor, p. 30

²⁰ Michael Taylor, *Anarchy and Cooperation*, London 1976, Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York 1984. Taylor's criticism of Axelrod's crude use of earlier work on supergames is in *Possibility of Cooperation*, pp. 69-71.

term cooperation can be rational and stable. It is, so to speak, the rats' choice.

This solution is formally similar to Hobbes's.²¹ The difference is that for Hobbes, the deterrent effect is achieved by postulating the existence of an external deterrent agency—the State—whereas for Taylor, the same effect is achieved by the threat each of us holds over the others of withdrawing our cooperation in the event that other people cease to cooperate. Hence Hobbes's problem can be solved in non-Hobbesian fashion—by a decentralized system of mutual vigilance rather than a centralized system of State control. Notice what Taylor's solution has achieved. It is superficial to think that a joint interest in cooperation is always sufficient for free individuals to cooperate—and thereby create community. But there are at least some conditions under which free and rational individuals will found a community of equal participation of the type advocated by Norman and Baker, in the absence of the State.

Is Taylor Really Normless?

As an exponent of the new economic realism in social theory, Taylor is rather hostile to the claims of norm and value (on pp. 30–1, he is positively unkind). Now, although it is true that considerations of ideology and social representation are not prominent in Taylor's treatment, I am not convinced that they are banished altogether. First, the supergame solution depends on regarding agents in a special light—as having a conception of self extending well into the future.²² Second, the cognitive operation in which conditional cooperators are involved is to promise to themselves that they will not change their cooperative strategy unless other people change to non-cooperation. And each person weighs up their choice of cooperation knowing that this principle of consistency governs the mentality—and hence the choice—of every other agent. Taylorian supergamesters are not bound to each other directly by morality, yet they treat each other in moral fashion because each knows all are prepared to defer gratification in favour of a future self.

Third, in other, more empirical writings partially incorporated into this new book, Taylor has advanced an excellent definition of community as 'a group of people (i) who have beliefs and values in common, (ii) whose relations are direct and many-sided and (iii) who practise

²¹ In both cases, deterrence reduces the highest payoff in the Prisoner's Dilemma, so that mutual cooperation is preferred by both players to 'one-sided' cooperation. The game is thereby transformed into what is called an Assurance Game, first analysed by Amartya Sen, 'Isolation, Assurance and the Social Rate of Discount', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 81, 1967 and discussed in Jon Elster, 'Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory: The Case for Methodological Individualism', *Theory and Society*, Vol 11, No. 4, 1982.

²² Supergames can be interpreted either as involving discounted payoffs into an infinite certain future or as involving undiscounted payoffs into a future of uncertain, potentially infinite length. In the first case, the discount parameter is akin to an interest rate and in the second, the probability that the relationship will end in the next period. Both interpretations were offered in the paper that proposed the supergame solution, but the probabilistic interpretation has tended to be lost in the subsequent debate. Martin Shubik, 'Game Theory, Behaviour, and the Paradox of Prisoner's Dilemma: Three Solutions', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 14, 1970.

generalized as well as merely balanced reciprocity'.²³ Relations are 'direct and many-sided' when they are not mediated by money or bureaucracy. Hence community is analytically distinct from the market and the State. Reciprocity is generalized and balanced when much (most?) of social life is enacted via a network of equal exchanges of goods and services. Community is thus defined as a non-exploitative social form, and in view of Roemer's work on the market and the State, it may very well be the only non-exploitative social form. The question then arises of the relation between the final element of the definition (which implies that Prisoner's Dilemmas are overcome in community) and the first element, which says that shared beliefs and values characterize community. On a strict interpretation of the supergame solution to the Prisoner's Dilemma shared beliefs and values are not necessary to achieve what will look like community (i.e. generalized and balanced reciprocity), except in the senses mentioned above that all agents have a similar conception of their morally extended selves. It might well be that shared values and beliefs of other kinds are liable to arise as a result of successful long-term cooperation, but the existence of long-term cooperation would not depend on the existence of shared values and beliefs.

This interpretation, which minimizes the significance of shared values and beliefs, is however more restrictive than the interpretation of community Taylor advanced in *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*.²⁴ There it is emphasized that community will sustain public goods provision not just through mutual threats to withhold reciprocal aid, but through moral sanctions (gossip, shaming rituals and so on) rooted in those shared values and beliefs which condemn free riding. The norms create a decentralized deterrent external to the original calculations of the rational actor, in like manner to the deterrent effect of the centralized Hobbesian state. In so far as 'shared values and beliefs' are independently important in resolving the Prisoner's Dilemma faced by an egalitarian community, Taylor is moving closer to Norman's solution, and neither writer has a good explanation for the existence of community unless they provide a good explanation for the existence of the requisite values and beliefs. (A functional explanation might be tried: cooperation-promoting norms exist because of their propensity to promote cooperation.) So Taylor cannot sustain a total purge of moral values.²⁵

A Question of Chicken

If totally normless solutions to the Prisoner's Dilemma are unlikely, then they are even less likely in an alternative model of public goods provision whose discovery marks the major development in Taylor's thinking since the original publication of *Anarchy and Cooperation*.²⁶

²³ Taylor, *Probability of Cooperation*, p. 23.

²⁴ Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*, Cambridge 1982.

²⁵ It might be said that, for example, shaming rituals or practices of ostracism are sanctions external to the individual, and so non-coercive, but it is difficult to conceive of the sanctions existing, or being effective, unless some values are relevantly internalized in the members of the community at large and in the victims of its punishments.

²⁶ The thinking was first published in joint work with Hugh Ward 'Chickens, Whales and Lumpy Goodie: Alternative Models of Public Goods Provision', *Political Studies* 30, 1982.

Say that a baby is crying. You and I are in the room. The sight and sound distress us both, and the more so the longer they go on. Hadn't somebody better *do* something? Yes, but whom? You, let us say, go to console the infant. The crying stops. Great relief all round.

The cessation of distress is a public good for both the adults, and one adult has made all the effort to create it. Yet this is not a Prisoner's Dilemma, because each of us finds the child's cry so distressing that we would each intervene to try and calm the baby for ourselves—at least eventually. Even if each of us knows that no one else will cooperate, each of us still prefers to create the public good. This is the structure of the Chicken game, and it will apply whenever the non-provision of the public good is so awful a possibility that there really is no choice about its being provided, save the choice of who provides it. It will tend to apply, *inter alia*, to the public provision of goods which satisfy needs rather than simply desires.

In the Prisoner's Dilemma, the problem is that the equilibrium of rational action—no public provision—is Pareto-inferior, although it is egalitarian. With Chicken, the equilibrium is inequalitarian—one person is left holding the baby—although this outcome is Pareto-optimal. Moreover, the equilibrium is almost certainly exploitative, because the person not holding the baby is doing better as a result of someone else holding the baby, and it is plausibly unjust that someone should benefit from toddler tranquillity without taking their share of mowl amelioration.

Chicken presents three points of interest. First, it makes clear that there are circumstances in which free and rational individuals will find themselves trapped at an inequalitarian outcome. One-sided cooperation does not always unravel. Second, this can occur on a small scale, say, in a two-person domestic setting. (Norman is wrong in Ch. 4 to think that home-life has to be a paradigm of non-exploitative community. Intimacy can easily go with inequality.) Third, and most significantly, an unequal equilibrium can occur even if the payoff structure is perfectly symmetrical, so that all the relevant resources are equally distributed—the baby's cry affects us both equally; we have equal soothing skills.

John Roemer's work has done much to restore the classical perception that since unequal resource distribution causes exploitation, resource equalization is necessary for non-exploitation. The case of Chicken suggests that resource equalization may not be sufficient because exploitation can persist when resources are the same. A very strict determinist, such as John Roemer, might object at this point that there must be some undisclosed reason—a latent inequality of situation—which explains why you and not I are left holding the baby. If your nerve is weaker than mine or—more plausibly—if you have been socialized by gender to have a lower threshold of reaction than I to a baby's cry, then here is a resource inequality which explains the inequality of outcome. This may be true, except that the inequality of outcome is here out of all proportion to the inequality of resource distribution: say your nerve breaks one hundredth, one millionth . . . of a second before mine, then you will do absolutely all the child care. And supposing the

payoff structure of a Chicken game really is symmetrical, a strict determinist will have to say that an inequalitarian equilibrium exists, but it is not clear how it can ever be reached, because there is no way to tell which of several identical people will be left holding the baby. It seems better to accept that an equilibrium of a symmetrical Chicken game will be attained, but under a distribution of individuals to choices that remains essentially accidental. There is exploitation of those who happen to be trapped in a pattern of cooperative behaviour by those who happen to have escaped. Chicken violates the limited self-ownership axiom of Roemer's constitution, since people who are equally able or infirm (who are, in fact, identical) receive quite different rewards, and this will be intolerable to liberals and socialists alike.

It is then a matter of concern to find with Mike Taylor that Chickens are prone to roost in the Prisoner's Dilemma supergame. Suppose there are 100 people in an egalitarian society and it is in each person's interest to help provide a good in the public social mode on condition that at least 59 other people do the same. Then any coalition of 60 people will provide the good, and be exploited by the remaining 40. The 61st person will rat out, but the 60th is trapped—if they rat out, all cooperation will collapse completely, and this would be against their best interests. The suffering sixty may not like it, but they have to grin and bear it. Thus, the generalization of the two-person Prisoner's Dilemma will often involve Chicken-like phenomena.²⁷ It follows that institutions of egalitarian public ownership will always have to resolve the problem posed by Chicken. There must be deterrence of free riding, and this will either come from the socialist State, the socialist conscience or the socialist community. Michael Taylor's middle ground of unprompted rational cooperation has ceased to exist, for the free riders in Chicken will know that those they exploit will never cease to provide them with the public good. My threat to withdraw unreciprocated aid from you is idle, if you know that what will punish you will hurt me as much. It is true that the suffering sixty have an obvious response: to exclude the forty free riders from access to the good, unless the forty compensate the sixty for their efforts. But then the good is no longer being provided in the public social mode, and the principle of public ownership is that much infringed.

Social Norms and Social Forms

No doubt Conservatism has succeeded recently for several reasons, some of them entirely prosaic. But part of its success has still derived from a simple formula of institutional reconstruction that has proved convincing: if it moves, privatize it; if it can't be moved, shackle it to Whitehall. And part of the appeal of the formula has come from the imaginary association of the market with the freedom of the whole population.

²⁷ Mike Taylor overlooks a very general technical reason for this result: the only possible configuration for an inequalitarian equilibrium in the (cardinally) symmetric N-person binary-choice game reproduces the essential structure of a-person Chicken. This argument is developed in 'Symmetry and Social Division', available from the author.

It would be reassuring if the Left could return a formula of corresponding simplicity, uniting an appealing social value with a preferred institutional form. But I am not so sure that such an easy connection can be made. It seems fairly clear that equality deserves reassertion as a value in its own right; that some kinds of equality conflict with some kinds of liberty, and that equality sometimes has the greater claim. But it is less clear what egalitarian institutions are. Community embodies equality, but the range of full community may well be short. And if communities are joined decentrally by markets, one might require the political inequalities inherent in the powers of State to restrict the growth of economic inequalities between communities.

Very likely the Left is in the position of everyone in fact rather than rhetoric: it must live with states, markets and communities, and a decent egalitarian society would very likely need them all. One who would cook the Thatcher goose should not put all their eggs in one basket, and never count their chickens before they are hatched.

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Introduction to Kovač Interview

When, in August 1988, the League of Communists of Serbia refused to accept the authority of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (which had instructed it to halt nationalist street demonstrations), it drew a line under a whole historical period that had started in 1945. In this multi-national and traditionally polycentric state, the Yugoslav party had provided the fundamental bond of society precisely because it had posed as a trans-national force. It offered a vision of socialism not tied to any particular national ideology, but which proclaimed national equality within and a Yugoslav sovereignty without the state's boundaries. It was already clear by the late 1950s that the continued health of the socialist project was intimately bound up with the democratization of internal political life. By the end of the 1960s, however, this option had been decisively rejected in favour of the continued monopoly of a party that was increasingly coming to represent a minority interest within society. It was in the first half of the 1980s that the party largely lost its traditional underpinning, with workers leaving the party in ever increasing numbers and instead forming strike committees—Yugoslavia today is a country gripped by continuous and permanent working-class unrest. It is above all this divergence between party and class that is putting a question-mark over Yugoslavia's very existence as a unified state. This is because the emerging political vacuum is being filled by the politics of national chauvinism, especially in Serbia and Macedonia, often systematically fanned by incumbent party and state functionaries.

The current economic crisis in Yugoslavia has revealed the two wasted decades during which local and Federal bureaucracies were stubbornly defending their power while all around them society and the economy were crumbling, and one revolutionary ideal after another was being jettisoned in favour of an increasingly naked struggle for survival. Today, two options are on public offer in Yugoslavia. The first, associated with the Slovene party leader Milan Kucan, offers a programme—so far only for Slovenia—of a reform from above, in the direction of greater political pluralism married to a 'mixed economy'. The second, associated with the Serbian party leader Slobodan Milošević, clamours for an authoritarian state and speaks the language of populist nationalism. This alternative has heavily relied on 'enemies'—finding these in the Albanian population of Yugoslavia and on the editorial boards of the country's student and youth journals. Bureaucratic reaction, not for the first time, has donned a 'national mask'.

A new wave of strikes, expected this autumn, coupled with the collapse of the Federal party's authority, could bring in its wake a third option: military rule. As the example of Poland has shown, such a move would only prolong the agony. The nature of 'the Slovene road', and hence its capacity to offer Yugoslavia a model of change that runs counter to that of intra-national strife, is therefore of particular interest to socialists both in Yugoslavia and abroad. It is explored below in an interview with Miha Kovač, a former editor of *Mladina*, the weekly journal of the Association of Socialist Youth of Slovenia.

Under Kucan, the Slovene party has been confronting a lively challenge from 'alternative' (ecological, peace, feminist, gay, etc.) movements—as well as more orthodox appeals to nationalism articulated by the traditional intelligentsia—with a policy of 'counter-argument' rather than repression, thus according them a *de facto* recognition. The main mediator between the old and new politics has been the ASYS and its journal. For example, it seemed perfectly natural that the youth branch of the recently formed (May 1988) Peasant Association—the country's first autonomous peasant organization since World War II—should join this official youth body, and that the young farmers should be welcomed by it just as in the past it had welcomed and supported other social movements from below. *Mladina* has, in fact, become the chief (though by no means only) spokesman for such movements, its popularity attested to by the fact that, in a republic of 1.7 million inhabitants, it has reached the enviable print-run of 80,000 copies per week.

The political ferment in Slovenia—and particularly the official toleration of explicit opposition—has caused considerable consternation in the centres of power elsewhere in the country (with the partial exception of Croatia). *Mladina's* critical forays have instilled real fear in all the conservative officials accustomed to stifling criticism by recourse to more traditional methods. In the cold war now raging within the country's political leadership, attitudes to the developments in Slovenia have become a symbolic line of divide between liberals and conservatives.

This interview was conducted in the shadow of the trial of three *Mladina* journalists and a junior army officer by a military court for alleged possession of a secret military document—a charge that was used both to deny the defendants civilian lawyers and to exclude the public from the proceedings. The trial coincided with growing concern in Slovenia following the revelation that, in the previous March, the army had been planning widespread arrests of leading Slovene intellectuals, on the pretext that a 'counter-revolution' was taking place in the Republic, and had been dissuaded in the event only by an energetic intervention on the part of the Slovene leadership. The arrest of the four served to confirm the impression that it was democracy itself that was on trial. This brought about an unprecedented public mobilization in defence of the accused and the creation of a Committee for the Protection of Human Rights. In August of this year they were sentenced to between five months and four years in prison, with both sides being given leave to appeal. The imprisonment of *Mladina's* editor and journalists, coupled with the rapid erosion of the federal party's authority, could well introduce new trends in Slovene political life. Whether the process of democratization can continue in Slovenia without embracing the rest of Yugoslavia, and whether democracy can be achieved unless it is socialist in character, are the two most vital questions facing Slovene and Yugoslav political activists.

interview

Miha Kovač

The Slovene Spring

How would you characterize the evolution of cultural and political life in Slovenia over the past few years?

To understand what is happening in Slovenia today, we have to go back to the 1970s and the crucial events of that decade: the defeat of the student movement, and the purge of the so-called liberal party leaders who tried at that time to establish a market economy in Yugoslavia and liberalize somewhat political life. The emergence of a nationalist current in the context of a broad mass movement in Croatia in 1970-1 was used as a pretext not just to move against the nationalists themselves, but also to suppress political currents on the left and to purge the reforming-liberal wing of the party, first in Croatia and then in other parts of the country. The economic problems which the reform had been designed to tackle were then alleviated by recourse to massive loans from the West, which helped to maintain high living standards not warranted by the actual level of production in Yugoslavia. One should bear in mind that the purge of liberals also involved removing hundreds of managers from the country's economic life.

Paradoxically, moreover, the removal of liberals coincided with the acceptance of many of their ideas, particularly in regard to decentralization of the economy on a republican—and hence also national—basis. As the democratic upsurge ended, the nationalisms or local interests of Yugoslavia's six republics and two autonomous provinces became a kind of surrogate for all other political identities. You could be active within the existing political structure only on the basis of defending the interests of your republic or province. This precluded the possibility of coalitions—with a different vision of political development—being formed across republican and provincial frontiers. Thus the system which had supposedly emerged through the defeat of Croat and other nationalisms turned out to be itself most conducive to nationalism. Nationalism is produced within the very structure of the Yugoslav system, its main root cause being the lack of institutionalized democracy.

The twin defeats of the student movement and the liberals had different effects in the various republics and provinces. In Croatia and Serbia, the activists of the sixties and the philosophers gathered around the journal *Praxis* did not change their ideas, but carried on their lonely struggle for political democratization, though this was difficult since

Praxis was banned and its potential contributors could not publish elsewhere. In Slovenia, however, where the influence of the *Praxis* intellectuals had not been so strong, something different happened. Some of the intellectuals who had been involved in the student movement gave up politics, locked themselves in their rooms and started to read books. Hence, the 1970s in Slovenia present a somewhat paradoxical picture: on the one hand, a total depoliticization of society and, on the other, widespread involvement in study. Two dominant ideological currents emerged: the so-called structuralists, influenced by Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, etc., who produced the journal *Problemi*; and a group interested in political economy, gathered around the journal *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, which was Marxist-oriented.

This purely theoretical research made three important political contributions. Firstly, a theory of Stalinism was elaborated which, in addition to a strong rejection of Stalinism itself, criticized the phenomenon of 'dissidence'. To simplify considerably, it argued that dissidents in East European (and other socialist) societies played a state-constitutive role: that their way of thinking was essentially similar to that of the bureaucratic elite, though with an inverted meaning attached to things. The second important product was an analysis of the formation of the Slovene nation which showed that much of what people believed to be natural was in fact historical, with strong ideological mechanisms in action. The political result of this work was that it distanced a certain layer of the intelligentsia from nationalism. It could be argued that this was a historic turning-point: one could be an intellectual without being in thrall to the national idea. The third major intellectual contribution was an analysis of political economy which laid bare the ideological constructs of the Stalinist so-called socialist economy.

Three 'imperatives' then emerged from this work, shaping the thinking of a whole new generation. If you wanted to change socialism, you should (1) not act as a dissident, (2) not act as a nationalist, (3) critically examine the claims made about the scientific status of the socialist bureaucracy's theory and practice. These young intellectuals, in other words, could not identify with any mainstream ideology in Slovene political life: neither with the Party, which was very rigid, nor with the traditional intellectuals associated with the journal *Nova Revija*, who see themselves as defenders of the Slovene nation and its cultural heritage.

What actually triggered off a new phase in Slovenia was the appearance of punk culture. In 1980 or 1981, four youngsters were arrested and accused of forming a fascist political organization. What had happened was that, like their contemporaries elsewhere in Europe, they had taken to wearing Nazi insignia. They, of course, had nothing to do with fascism. This produced a sudden politicization of the youth media, especially of Radio Student, and the intellectual current described above started to articulate its positions through defending these youngsters. At this time too, some of its most prominent members—for example, Igor Bavčar and Srečo Kirm—were elected to leading positions in the Slovene Socialist Youth Alliance, and very quickly started to transform this organization.

The Youth Alliance (and the same can be said for the Slovene Communist Party itself) did not know what to do, which language to use, because it understood that the vision of socialism offered hitherto was no longer in tune with reality and that an ideological renewal was required. It was relatively easy for those who were confident about their idea of what socialist reality should look like to become a factor of change. A new attitude of the youth organization towards the media emerged, which was that the media should become critical of society and of traditional politics. Thus in the 1980s an independent youth press was born in Slovenia. The 1986 congress of the Youth Alliance at Krško, which I attended as the then editor of the Socialist Youth Alliance journal *Mladina*, adopted a 22-point programme for changing Yugoslavia, most of which was already being disseminated through *Mladina*.

This change was intimately connected with the crisis of legitimacy of the League of Communists which now became evident in the country as a whole. All the supposed achievements of self-management, all the values which the party claimed to have realized in Yugoslavia, were clearly not true—the situation was just the opposite. The party claimed that the workers had complete power over the distribution of surplus labour, but in reality they could not even decide the level of their wages, let alone how the enterprises were run. Current economic figures show that most enterprises in fact no longer produce a surplus and the majority of workers are paid salaries below the existential minimum. For example, workers at the Belgrade tractor factory *Zvez*, who recently went on strike, earn £20 a month—enough to buy one shirt, or 50 loaves of bread. The extravagant claim that Yugoslav self-management was the most advanced economic system in the world was refuted also by the \$20 billion external debt. Finally, the introduction of a state of emergency in Kosovo in 1981 put paid to the belief that we had solved the national question in the best possible way, or indeed even solved it at all.

Reactions to this general crisis of legitimacy varied from republic to republic. Thus, in Bosnia-Herzegovina (until the 'Agrokomerc' affair¹) the party leadership established a highly authoritarian system of political and economic control. Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, on the other hand, accepted the need for a radical economic liberalization, and with it a bourgeois belief that the invisible hand of the market can solve all the country's economic problems by closing down unsuccessful enterprises

¹ Agrokomerc was a large agri-business employing some 13,000 workers, based in the predominantly muslim north-western corner of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Run on autocratic but efficient lines, it was a considerable economic success in an area of long-standing poverty and high emigration. In spring 1987, after a vigorous press campaign, the enterprise directors were arrested and accused of financial malpractice amounting to 'counter-revolution' (a charge which could incur the death penalty). Since the enterprise, as a large employer, was deeply integrated with the local political structures, its demise provoked the downfall of major political figures both in the republic and even at the all-Yugoslav level. While Agrokomerc's detractors claimed that a \$500 million deficit had been covered by the emission of fraudulent promissory notes, ousted managing director Pliker Abdic has argued convincingly during the trial (now postponed) that Agrokomerc's financial practices differed little from those prevalent throughout the economy, and were in fact an inevitable result of the monetary squeeze on Yugoslav industry as a whole. Given the close integration of politics and economy, it is possible that political rather than economic considerations played the primary role in the enterprise's collapse.

and allowing competitive new ones to emerge. In this view, there is no need to fear unemployment, hence no need for a global programme of welfare relief for impoverished and unemployed workers. Such a programme would also mean a lot of work for the state bureaucracy, and militate against any reduction of the role of the state, which is seen as a precondition for economic regulation through the market. At the same time this neo-liberal ideology sees nothing wrong in the growing capitalization of the military industry, which is becoming an ever more important factor of Yugoslav foreign trade.

Even in those republics committed to marketization, however, the political framework varies. In Serbia it has gone hand in hand with a growing emphasis on the leading role of the party, or rather its leadership, coupled with a return to traditional national values if not nationalism. Since the recent purge of its liberal wing, the Serbian party has proclaimed itself as the vanguard force not of workers, but of the Serb nation and its supposed historic interests. This endangers an 'enemy-producing' ideology: anyone who does not believe that a market economy, a strong state and a monolithic party will solve all problems is treated as an enemy of the people. For this reason, the Serbian press and politicians find themselves in a state of war with everybody else. They blame the Kosovo Albanian leadership for the problems, real and imaginary, of the Serb minority population in the Province—despite the fact that southern regions of the Republic of Serbia proper, under direct Belgrade administration, are likewise experiencing large-scale migration due to unemployment and backwardness. They are up in arms against the Vojvodina leadership—which is unwilling to surrender the Province's autonomy—and accuse it of thereby objectively aiding Albanian 'separatism'. Croats are attacked generically as being 'anti-Serb', and Slovenes because of their tolerance of 'counter-revolution'—i.e. a relatively free press and politics.

In contrast, the Slovene leadership believes that economic renewal is impossible without a renewal in political life and has increasingly come to argue that the right of minorities should be acknowledged in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. This is not a call for tendency rights, but a more limited request that minorities be allowed to keep their ideas even though the majority may disagree with them. It is in fact a gesture of self-defence. But this demand, put forward by the Slovene leadership at an all-Yugoslav level, has helped in turn the opposition in Slovenia, which is itself in the position of a minority with regard to the Slovene party. A further important shift has come in the attitude of the Slovene party leadership towards the media and independent social movements, a shift that resembles what happened with the Youth Alliance in the early eighties. Recently, the Slovene party leader Kučan publicly quoted Voltaire to the effect that he would fight against certain opinions at the same time as defending the right for them to be expressed. The party, in other words, may not agree with the ideas propagated by the peace or gay movement, but it supports their right to express themselves. And whereas, a few years ago, to speak about 'civil society' meant placing yourself in opposition, the recent Slovene party conference was itself openly discussing the concept. It has accepted the idea, moreover, that it should rule not through

repressive mechanisms but by the force of its arguments; that it should allow limitations on its power.

You say that there is a struggle in Yugoslavia today between those with a vested interest in retaining the political monopoly of the party and those who are in favour of political pluralism. How was this struggle won inside Slovenia itself?

There is a widespread belief in Slovenia that the 'Slovene spring' has to do with its Western cultural tradition, and that whereas Serbs belong to the tradition of Byzantium and Oriental despotism, Slovenes are somehow naturally democratic. This, of course, is entirely false. Indeed, in the seventies Belgrade was an enclave of freedom: intellectuals elsewhere in Yugoslavia who had problems with their local authorities published their work there. It was in Belgrade that the initiative to abolish Article 133 of the Yugoslav Penal Code, the one which defines 'verbal delict', emerged in the late 1970s, whereas it was only in 1984 that *Mladina* started a big campaign against this Article, and in 1986 that its abolition was adopted by the Youth Alliance of Slovenia as part of its programme.

However, when the Slovene delegates proposed at the Federal youth congress and in the Federal Assembly that the Article be removed from the Penal Code, they were attacked in Belgrade. And they were attacked not because of the intrinsic content of their ideas but as *Slovenes*, as people offering unacceptable *Slovene* ideas. Their concern with freedom of speech or writing was attacked as an expression of their particularist national identity. Hence, we have the paradox of Serb dogmatists agreeing with those Slovenes who consider a desire for democracy to be part of the Slovene national identity. Moreover, relying on a vulgar interpretation of history, they also agree that the current agitation of the Serbian leadership for 'unity' and re-centralization is part of the Serb national identity.

Because of the nature of the Yugoslav system, there is a tendency for any democratic or universal demand to become particularized, 'nationalized', as it enters the political stage, so that the struggle among the different republican and provincial bureaucracies soon becomes translated into a struggle between different 'natural and authentic' national interests. The bureaucracies then play the role of natural and authentic representatives of their nations. Hence, the conflict between the Slovene and Serbian party leaderships, for example, leaves the global structure of society unchanged. Neither Slovene democratization nor Serb authoritarian and populist revival seriously threatens the dominant role of the bureaucracy in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, rather than opening up the question of its responsibility for the severe social and economic crisis in Yugoslavia, these differences have been used further to naturalize the bureaucracy's power.

The Yugoslav bureaucracy is not a monolithic apparatus of power but a web made up of different national factions which—however resounding their clashes may appear—are never in a truly antagonistic relationship to one other. This does not mean, of course, that the process of democratization in Slovenia should be dismissed as unimportant. But

its internal and external limits are in fact the same. Internally, it is restricted by the dogma of the leading role of the League of Communists, which would become threatened by any proper radicalization of this democratization process. Externally, it comes up against the Belgrade hardliners, who would likewise be threatened by its extension. The Slovene politicians argue that a radical democratization has no chance because of Belgrade's hostility; that therefore one must be cautious. In reality, if there was no Belgrade, they would have to invent it.

The desire of the Slovene party to allow self-regulation of certain strata of society is thus limited by its desire to retain all real power. The leadership likes its new democratic image, but has no intention of breaking openly with the Belgrade dogmatists. It knows that democratization is a precondition for solving the crisis, yet it is very much committed to the notion that the bureaucracy and its state apparatus express and safeguard the socialist character of society. Despite this contradiction, however, the modest existing democratization of Slovene public life has been attacked in many other parts of the country as a form of 'special warfare' organized by the CIA, the KGB, or whoever might be interested in destabilizing Yugoslavia. So we have two positions emerging within the Yugoslav party, which are fundamentally different and increasingly in conflict; naturally they will not be able to coexist for long. To sum up: the fight against bureaucracy and for democracy is one and the same in Slovenia and in Yugoslavia as a whole. If confined to just one of the Yugoslav nations, it runs the risk of turning into its opposite: acceptance of limits, and compromise with the bureaucracy.

What are the main ideological currents in Slovenia today?

Slovenia is today split, roughly speaking, into three ideological camps: the Slovene party, the traditional intelligentsia and the alternative movements. If one understands as democratization the emergence of this split, then democratization has been achieved. In reality, however, this is only the beginning. The fight between these three currents is continuing, and this can best be seen in the debate about the projected new Federal constitution. Each of the three has its own view of the future Yugoslavia and the future Slovenia.

The position of the Slovene Communist Party, simply put, is as follows. 'We need a very radical economic reform, for which we must find allies in other parts of Yugoslavia, and especially in Croatia and Serbia, which are the most developed parts of the federation. But on the political front, the level of democratization is a matter for each republic to determine. So if the Serbian party wishes to have an authoritarian regime, then let it do so—provided that we can continue our process of democratization in Slovenia.' I think that this view is wrong, and that the future will show that those who are blocking the economic reform in Yugoslavia are precisely the same ones who want to have an authoritarian political regime throughout the country. This position, if pursued to its logical outcome, would lead to the transformation of the Yugoslav federation into a confederation or to the creation of independent national states. Such a prospect is neither desired nor realistic.

This is why I think that the Slovene party will have to change its orientation—although how, and in which direction, remains to be seen. Its relative passivity during the army-directed trial of the *Mladina* editor and journalists does not encourage one to believe that it is likely to engage in an outright confrontation with the dogmatists over the issue of democracy.

The second important current is represented by the traditional intelligentsia, which controls a whole range of cultural institutions like galleries, the theatre, the Writers' Association, etc. These people are politically very strong. A couple of months ago the Slovene Writers, together with some sociologists, drafted their own proposal for a new Slovene constitution. As far as I know, this text is a kind of copy of the Bavarian constitution, and its central emphasis on the notion of human rights is in my view absolutely correct. But it also has a preamble which describes this constitution as establishing a distinct Slovene state, which must have its own national army, relying on a specifically Slovene military tradition (that of the 7th-century Slav ruler Kocelj) and on the tradition of the peasant uprisings of the 16th century. Its authors put in things as well about the sanctity of life and the family. Furthermore, Yugoslavia is not mentioned at all—they do not care much for it! Nor do they refer to socialism, on the grounds that it would mean inserting ideology into the constitution. As if omitting it were not also an ideological intervention! They have produced, in other words, a very murky ideological document; and the trouble is that, if you buy the constitution, you also buy this ideological framework. In fact, they are just copying a West European constitution, based on bourgeois ideology, so their 'anti-ideological' stance cannot be taken very seriously.

The third position on the constitution emerged through a critique of the Writers' draft. For the position of the Writers is a kind of inverted image of the old dogmatic Communist view that in order to secure economic democracy you have to abolish political democracy, which is a bourgeois inheritance. The Writers say that if you want to have political democracy, you have to abolish economic democracy, because this is a legacy of the Stalinist era. In other words, they are moving within the same framework and they understand each other very well. We, in the circles around *Mladina* and the alternative movements, argue that you can have both economic and political democracy. We believe that self-management should remain as the institution of enterprise democracy, only the political bureaucracy should be removed from power—which could be accomplished by changes in the electoral system and by the creation of free trade unions, etc. In particular, this would mean transforming the present Chamber of Socio-Political Organizations, which includes the League of Communists, the Socialist Alliance of Working People, the Youth Association, the trade unions, the veteran organizations, etc. and in which the dominant role is played by the party. Our idea is to change this body into a democratic political assembly, without any leading role for the party. It would be elected directly, not on the basis of a classical multiparty system—which we think would be a regression—but on the basis of citizens organizing themselves in various political movements expressing various interests (including, incidentally, those of consumers).

What implications would this have for the Republican and Federal Assemblies?

These bodies, which represent citizens on a territorial basis, are also highly unsatisfactory and are coming under criticism everywhere in Yugoslavia. For example, at present a representative is first elected to your local commune, which then sends its representatives to the city commune, which in turn sends delegates to the Republican Assembly, which finally sends delegates to the Federal Assembly. In all these stages which separate the local voter from the Federal centre, any initiative from below simply gets lost, as experience has shown. The idea now is to change this system by introducing direct elections at all levels. This would lead to greater political differentiation among citizens, and also increase the responsibility of the representatives.

The existing system produces a political leadership that is not responsible to anybody. Furthermore, it produces a very narrow circle of leading cadres. In 1984 we published an analysis in *Mladina* which showed that, over the previous fifteen years, only nineteen people had shared all the top posts in Slovenia. Hence, although in Slovenia things are better with regard to democracy than in the rest of Yugoslavia, they are by no means satisfactory. The Socialist Alliance—a kind of heir to the earlier People's Front that was supposed to involve all the population—still has no political power, even though in the past few years many people have been elected to this organization who five or six years ago could not have been. For things to improve, elements of classical bourgeois democracy are needed.

Who is counted as part of the alternative movements? How many people are involved?

The alternative movements involve feminists, gays, ecologists, the peace movement and most of the intellectuals working with such journals as *Problemi*, *Časopis* or *Mladina*. The peace movement is very small—I should say only twenty or so activists!—yet public opinion polls show that some sixty per cent of Slovenes support its ideas, which involve nuclear disarmament, legalization of conscientious objection, and greater social control over the Army. A major instrument in popularizing the ideas of the peace movement has been the attacks on it in the Belgrade press. The first declaration of the movement was signed five years ago, by just a few people, but its impact on the public media was the same as if several hundred people had been involved.

The feminists meet without men, so I don't know much about them; but they do a lot of good propaganda work. Again, we are dealing with a small number of activists, perhaps a dozen. The gay movement, despite its small size, has managed to do some important things. In Yugoslavia, laws regarding homosexuality differ from republic to republic: whereas in Serbia, for example, it is a punishable offence, the same is not true for Slovenia. Since the pressure gays face here comes not from the state but from civil society, they have been trying to increase social tolerance for their life-style, and have managed to organize some quite big festivals in Ljubljana that have been very important for the development of Slovene consciousness. At first, Slovene conserva-

tives said that a public gay festival would only help to spread AIDS in Yugoslavia, but then the Slovene Medical Council declared that it was good for gays to organize to protect themselves by means of public propaganda, and that the worst thing would be to close one's eyes to the AIDS danger. The ecological movement has likewise achieved considerable popular support in Slovenia, though once again the number of activists is small. It is confronted, however, with the same problem of fundamentalism faced by the German Greens—a tendency to downgrade small or local activities, given the global nature of ecological threats.

Slovenia is economically more successful than other parts of Yugoslavia. Is it this which has allowed the republic's greater flexibility and openness to democratic developments? If a real economic crisis were to hit Slovenia, would it put an end to the process of democratization?

It is difficult to predict what will happen in Yugoslavia. Even what is happening today seemed unlikely a few years ago. My opinion is that the process of democratization has taken deep root in Slovene society. The reasons are specific to Slovenia and are probably connected with the pattern of economic development, which in Slovenia was not centred on the capital city. In Macedonia, for example, a major part of industry is concentrated in Skopje; when this industry failed, the whole republic was in trouble. But in Slovenia we have many small industrial centres which combine two or three different branches of industry, so that if one branch collapses two will remain and the locality will be able to confront the problem on its own. For example, in Velenje, a small town in northern Slovenia, there is a coal mine, a refrigerator factory and agriculture. So if the coal mine has to close, adjustments can be made in the other two. This has meant that the Slovenian economy is far more flexible in its response to the economic crisis. Finally, Slovenia is geographically very near to the West, so that there is a flow of people and business across the border. This has meant that the Slovenian economy has so far managed to survive. But, of course, it cannot do so in the longer run if the rest of Yugoslavia collapses economically.

Recently there has been much discussion in Slovenia and Yugoslavia about possible military intervention in Slovenia. There was talk of planned mass arrests of public figures in March of this year. Since then, the reaction of Slovene and all-Yugoslav public opinion to the imprisonment of Borštnar, Janša and Tasit by the military authorities has been considerable. Can you tell us something about the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and other initiatives in relation to these arrests?

Discussion on whether a military coup d'état is possible in Yugoslavia began with Tito's death. As the differences between the evolution of Slovenia (partially also Croatia) and that of the other republics grew, these rumours acquired greater weight. The recently retired Minister of Defence Branko Mamula was forced several times to state that the Yugoslav Army had no such ambitions. In April of this year, however, rumours started to spread that the Army was preparing a military intervention in Slovenia. At the start of May, leaked minutes of a closed meeting of the Federal party Presidency started to circulate in Ljubljana. At this meeting, the Slovene party leader Kučan had criticized the Army

for approaching the Slovene head of police with a view to possible cooperation following the arrest of leading Slovene intellectuals and activists by the Army. Kučan's complaint had been that this was done without the Slovene leadership's knowledge.

There are several reasons why the Army is hostile towards the 'Slovene spring'. Firstly, the Army has remained faithful to the concept of authoritarian socialism, so that it views the Slovene democratization process as a 'counter-revolution'—a position that it shares with the current party leadership in Serbia. Secondly, it sees itself as the bastion of Yugoslavism, therefore dislikes any widening of differences between the republics. Thirdly, the Slovene leadership has allowed *Mladina* to criticize the Army's plan to produce its own supersonic fighter plane, as well as the sale of arms to countries like Ethiopia. Finally, *Mladina* has disclosed that the Yugoslav Defence Minister (now retired) built himself a villa on the Adriatic coast at state expense and using conscript labour.

When on 31 May Ivan Borštnar, a sergeant-major in the Yugoslav army, Janez Janša, a columnist for *Mladina* and well-known critic of the Yugoslav military, and David Tasić, a journalist on *Mladina*, were arrested, everybody was convinced that this was the beginning of the rumoured mass arrests. Two weeks later the three of them, together with Franci Zavrl, *Mladina's* acting editor, were charged with handling classified military documents. This was taken as an excuse to close the trial to the public. The accused were not allowed to have civilian lawyers, and only their closest family members were allowed to visit them in military prison.

The Slovene public was left to deduce what the whole thing was about from two statements. The first, made by the military prosecutor, was that the public could not be informed about the content of the military document. At the same time, Borštnar told his sister he had given the document in question to Tasić because, on reading it, he became 'scared for the future of the Slovene nation'. So everybody assumed that the document contained details of a military conspiracy against the 'Slovene spring'.

This explains the breadth of the protests and the tremendous support given to the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights set up immediately after the arrests to help the accused. We started to collect signatures on a petition that they should be released until the final verdict and allowed to prepare their defence with civilian lawyers. Within one month we had 100,000 signatures and 500 affiliated organizations, including cultural institutions, enterprises, hospitals and party cells. The importance of the Committee grew as it became clear that the Slovene leadership had no power to influence the Army's conduct. When the Presidency of Slovenia declared that civilians should be tried in civilian courts and have civilian lawyers, the Army's answer was that military courts were independent from politics.

On 28 July Borštnar was sentenced to four years, Janša and Zavrl to eighteen months and Tasić to five months in prison. Slovene official

politics and the Committee have reacted differently to the verdicts. The former has concentrated on the fact that the trial was conducted in the Serbo-Croat language, in violation of the Republican and Federal constitutions: as a Federal body, the military should have conducted the trial in the Slovene language. The Slovene Central Committee has consequently started a campaign in Belgrade for a re-trial because of this constitutional violation. The Committee for the Protection of Human Rights, however, has chosen a different orientation. It agrees that the Army's insistence on Serbo-Croat as the language of the court was an attack on Slovene sovereignty. But its main concern is with the content of the document in question. Worried that the document may be related to the planned military action in Slovenia, it wants it to be examined by competent civilian bodies. It is also campaigning for a re-trial, on the grounds that the proceedings frequently violated established legal norms. However, leading military personnel have recently made several statements arguing that 'counter-revolution' in Slovenia is growing in strength by the day. So the prospects for success of either campaign seem rather bleak. In the last analysis, the struggle for democracy in Yugoslavia will depend on how the masses react.

How are peasants and workers reacting to the economic crisis?

The Yugoslav peasant is faced with problems that are common to all similar societies. In the first place, Slovenian peasants own their own farms, which are too small to sustain the use of modern agricultural machinery. They would like, therefore, to raise the maximum land-holding, which is at present ten hectares. The second problem is that prices, which are decided by the state, are fixed very late in the year and are not keeping pace with inflation. In the early spring, when the peasant prepares for sowing, he is not sure whether he should sow wheat or maize, because he does not know what the prices will be. The second peasant demand, therefore, is that prices should be decided in advance and be more in line with real costs. In fact, the peasants would like the market to determine agricultural prices. Bureaucratic incompetence has produced a kind of revivalist *laissez-faire* attitude, despite the fact that such a policy is not practised anywhere.

Slovenian peasants have just formed their own association. When we talk of this peasant union, we can rightly call it a union of the entire Slovene peasantry. There are some 150,000 peasants in Slovenia (out of a population of 1.7 million) and 1,500 actually turned up for the founding meeting of the Peasant Association. There are no agricultural labourers in Slovenia, because the plots are too small. Until recently, the Slovene peasant was very often also a factory-worker: he would get his wage in the factory, produce enough food to feed himself, and even have a little surplus to sell. The economic crisis, however, has put an end to this dual economy. Many young people who in the past, after completing agronomic studies, would have stayed on in the cities and worked in an office for several years, are now just going back to their farms because there is no work for them. They have brought a new spirit into the peasant movement. Yugoslavia today, despite its great potential for being self-sufficient in food, is in fact importing it. The economy would be much more stable if the country produced its own

food. We have the paradoxical fact that Vojvodina, which according to the plans of the German Third Reich was supposed to become one of Europe's major wheat-growing areas, now produces less food than Austria. So the roots of the peasant unrest are to be found in forty years of wrong-headed agricultural policy.

Workers are striking and marching in large numbers, and they are making demands which are not limited to wages but raise wider social and political issues. Will the right to strike be legalized in the near future?

I would like to say first of all that Slovene intellectuals do not wish to put themselves in the position of telling the workers what to do. Of course, the intellectuals support the workers' struggle for their rights. A situation is likely to develop, in fact, in which intellectuals might play the sort of role that KOR played in Poland in 1980: i.e. not a party organization, but a body offering help to workers in negotiations with the state.

It is commonly accepted that the Polish unrest was based on the mass of workers, but did not find a proper response in party circles; whereas the 'Prague Spring' was a movement for reform starting from above and initiated by intellectuals, but did not have strong worker support. We would like to think that what is happening in Slovenia is a combination of both: there is a strong movement in the party apparatus, among intellectuals and also among the workers fighting for classical workers' rights. One result is that the Slovene Trade Unions, having for the past forty odd years behaved as a transmission belt for the party leadership, have decided to change their role. They have acknowledged that workers should have a legal right to strike, and have produced a set of ten rules stipulating that it is the union's duty to organize a strike where workers cannot satisfy their demands through normal channels. If the trade union fails to do so, then the workers have the right to elect a strike committee, which acquires all the legal rights of a trade union. We expect the number of strikes in Slovenia to increase rapidly in the coming months, and events will show whether this move by the trade unions is an adequate response or not.

Where does this leave self-management organs like enterprise Workers' Councils, etc?

Nobody is talking seriously about them any more. The fact is that workers sit on those councils and can't decide anything. So the workers are looking for new forms of organization. You must remember that it took forty years of worker unrest before Solidarnosc appeared in Poland. In Slovenia, we are only at the beginning of such a development. The fundamental assumption of self-management—that one could reach agreement on all open questions in society—presupposed that society was harmonious, without contradictions. The crisis of the self-management project is due precisely to the fact that Yugoslavia is not a classless society, but one in which contradictions exist and cannot be resolved solely by negotiations. In other words, the industrial conflicts which exist in Slovenia cannot be resolved through the existing self-management mechanisms and new ones are needed.

What outcome do you see in the near future?

Up to a point, a certain re-centralization of Yugoslavia is necessary, especially in the field of economic development. You have a situation, for example, where the Smederevo steelworks in Serbia is producing massive losses, while at the same time Slovenia is modernizing its own steelworks in Jesenice. The railways are another classic example. In the rest of Europe, the railway systems are centralized because, apart from anything else, the technology demands it; but in Yugoslavia we have broken up our railway network among the republics. What is needed, then, is a joint economic policy at the all-Yugoslav level. The problem is that the so-called unitarist forces wish to force through unification also in the education system, in cultural matters and in the sphere of political institutions. People are, of course, extremely sensitive about attempts to take away, for instance, their national education system, and a rational balance must be struck between the necessary centralization and the things that should remain within the competence of the republics. A clear acknowledgement of differences would be a step towards democratization of the country. And without democratization there is no possibility of overcoming national identifications in favour of an all-Yugoslav differentiation on the basis of plans and programmes. Without democratization, there is no future for Yugoslavia.

We must also take into account the fact that economic reform will have different implications for the different regions of Yugoslavia. The system of aiding underdeveloped republics and Kosovo, for example, is likely to undergo a major revision. Until now, the developed republics and Vojvodina have given money to a special Fund, which then hands it over to the political oligarchies in the underdeveloped regions. The latter decide on their own how to use the funds—the donors have no control over how the money is spent. Often it has not been invested in production but spent to maintain social peace in these areas. Of course, the same can be said for unproductive investment in other parts of Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav Economic Chamber has come up with the idea that the Fund be changed into a Bank for Development. Enterprises wishing to invest in underdeveloped areas of Yugoslavia would then be given special benefits, like cheap loans, waivers of taxation for a certain number of years, etc. Naturally, part of the money would be set aside for the development of infrastructure and services. But the political leaderships of Kosovo, Macedonia, etc. are resisting this, because it would lead to a loss of power for themselves. Given that power ultimately resides with those who decide about money, there are also fears of the implicit loss of national sovereignty: economic liberalization is bound to aggravate the economic and cultural gap between the better-off and poorer Yugoslav regions.

There is, in fact, little if no all-Yugoslav discussion concerning economic democracy in the context of the economic reform. This is due to the fact that the reform is understood in various ways. Differences are very real even among those who favour economic liberalization. For example, when the Serbian leadership speaks of 'market economy' they link

it to a strong, centralized and authoritarian state. In Slovenia, on the other hand, the idea of market economy carries the opposite image of a decentralized state, and a certain limitation of the party's political monopoly. Moreover, if we start with the fact that workers in Yugoslavia are exploited as a class, in other words that they do not decide how—and how much—surplus will be pumped out of their labour, then it becomes perfectly clear that the future of the economic reform and of internal economic relations will ultimately be decided not in the economic but in the political sphere. This means that the answer to the question: Will Yugoslavia have a market economy and what will it look like? depends on another question: Which faction in the Yugoslav party will prevail? In other words, the outcome will depend on the balance of power within the bureaucratic apparatus as inflected by mass mobilizations from below.

The recent events in Slovenia have taught us some important lessons. First, that without elements of so-called bourgeois democracy—freedom of speech, democratic elections, independent trade unions, institutionalized political pluralism etc.—socialism cannot progress. Secondly, that the process of democratization in Yugoslavia cannot be limited to one or two republics, but must include the whole country. Finally, that this process of democratization and reform will involve many different struggles at all levels of society.

Interviewers: BM, RB.

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THE ECONOMY OF SOCIALISM

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Socialization of the Market

Geoffrey Ingham

Commercial Capital in England

Andrew Kopkind

Jesse Jackson and the Democrats

James Petras

What Is at Stake in Chile?

Ingga Haug

Women in the Third Reich

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Each week that passes brings fresh evidence of the historical soul-searching that is now taking place in the Eastern bloc countries of Europe. There can no longer be any doubt that, in the years of stagnation associated with Brezhnev's leadership, top-down administrative planning became an ever tighter barrier to further economic development, standing in contradiction with the system of socialized property rather than being its straightforward expression. The lack of motivation for quality control, technological innovation and productivity growth, together with the largely enforced exclusion of Comecon from a broader international division of labour, have meant that the Eastern bloc continues to lag behind the major capitalist sectors of the world economy, often to an increasingly dangerous degree. In these circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that the textbook model of the market, with its price discipline and forms of competitive adjustment, should appear to many in Eastern Europe as the embodiment of a superior economic rationality and the answer to all the region's problems. But however necessary, and indeed productive, it may be to reintroduce certain market mechanisms into the Eastern-bloc economies, only a combination of sober analysis and political resolution will be able to avert the mass structural unemployment, endemic inflation, income inequality and social disaggregation that have generally attended marketization drives in the capitalist world.

In this issue Diane Elson intervenes in a debate on Alec Nove's book 'The Economics of Feasible Socialism' that began in NLR more than two years ago and has included contributions by Ernest Mandel, Włodzimierz Brus and Alec Nove himself. Whilst agreeing with Mandel against Nove that socialists are not simply forced to choose between all-inclusive central planning and market coordination, or some combination of the two, and that the nexus of objective informal cooperation provides the basis for an institutionalized alternative, Elson insists against Mandel that a socialist economy requires a coherent structure of price norms if it is to have a rational basis for investment decisions. In a thought-provoking second section, Elson goes on to outline the ways in which socialist public authorities could perform the task of 'socializing the market', of organizing non-antagonistic social relations within networks of buyers and sellers that

transcend the autonomy of the enterprise. In forthcoming issues we hope to carry further articles that continue this important discussion.

Fifteen years of military dictatorship in Chile provide a convincing demonstration that, in actually existing capitalism, the role of market forces varies historically not so much with the lofty course of debate on economic efficiency as with the mundane need of ruling classes to defend their power against the growing pressure of labour. Once the integrative project of Chilean Christian Democracy had lost its capacity to hold back popular insurgency, the generals stepped in with a battery of repressive measures and new market structures to break up the existing working-class concentrations. James Petras here looks at the shape of the Chilean formation that has developed under the dictatorship, and considers the truth behind the picture of prosperity that has been painted by supporters of the regime. As the question of a political transition finally comes onto the agenda in Chile, Petras is particularly concerned to locate those elements of the changed social structure which might enable the renewal of the traditions of popular struggle so brutally interrupted in 1973.

Geoffrey Ingham's book 'Capitalism Divided?' has been repeatedly cited in the debate sparked off by Perry Anderson's 'Figures of Descent' (NLR 161). In NLR 167 Michael Barratt Brown developed a critique of the thesis, enunciated by both Ingham and Anderson, that industrial development in Britain has been hindered by the essentially commercial character of British capital. In this issue Ingham enters a sustained defence of his positions.

As we go to press, it seems increasingly likely that the South African occupation of Namibia is about to come to an end, as part of a negotiation that will also relieve Angola of direct military pressure from Pretoria. Victoria Brittain here looks back at the crucial role played by Cuban forces in the defence of independent Angola, and in particular at the campaign this year that inflicted the first defeat on the armies of the apartheid regime.

In our reviews section Frigga Haug discusses Claudia Koonz's path-breaking work on women in the Third Reich, 'Mothers in the Fatherland', while Terry Eagleton surveys the tradition of the 'campus novel' with special reference to David Lodge's recently published 'Nice Work'. Finally we would like to apologize for two inaccuracies in the 'themes' of the last issue. Yuri Afanasyev is in fact Rector of the Moscow Institute of Historical Archives, and Miha Kovač is a leading member of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia.

Diane Elson

Market Socialism or Socialization of the Market?

The virtues of the market and the deficiencies of central planning have become common sense for many socialist economists, both in the capitalist countries and in those of 'actually existing socialism'.¹ Some spirited defences have recently been made of non-market forms of economic co-ordination, particularly by Ernest Mandel,² but in my view these do not provide fully satisfactory responses to the advocates of market socialism. In this essay I shall discuss the arguments put forward by Mandel in recent issues of *New Left Review*, and those of his principal target of criticism, Alec Nove. I share Mandel's view that, despite Nove's argument to the contrary, there is an alternative between the market and bureaucratic planning. But I begin to explore an alternative along quite different lines. I agree with Nove that the price mechanism is an indispensable instrument of co-ordination for a socialist economy, but argue that it must be socialized if it is to work for rather than against socialism. The debate between Mandel and Nove is about the possibility of a society of freely associated producers in which commodity production has been superseded, rather

than about the 'marketization' of actually existing socialism. It is necessary to recognize that advocates of market socialism see the market as a form of free association: indeed, this is one of the major points of their case. The market cannot be dismissed *a priori*: the argument should rather be about whether the conditions necessary for the market to function adequately as a form of free association can actually be sustained. Nor should the discussion be foreclosed by defining socialism in terms of the absence of commodity production and by making a simple equation between commodity production and buying and selling. I do not intend to enter here into a detailed consideration of Marx's concepts of the commodity and of commodity fetishism. I shall simply propose that the aspect of these concepts that makes them analytically useful is the idea of commodities as 'autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race'.³ The commodity, in Marx's writings, is not fundamentally a good which is bought and sold for money. To be sure, sentences can be isolated in which the commodity appears to have no more than this sense, but the structure of Marx's texts as a whole suggests something less banal. The problematic status of commodities derives not from the mere fact of sale and purchase, but from the fact of sale and purchase under conditions which enable them to take on an independent life of their own. It is this independence of commodities which enables a social relation between men to assume the fantastic form of a relation between things: 'The persons exist for one another merely as representatives and hence owners, of commodities.'⁴

Such an interpretation leaves open the possibility of creating a society in which goods are exchanged for money but do not have an independent life of their own; and in which persons do not exist for one another merely as representatives of commodities. This possibility, which requires not the abolition but the socialization of buying and selling and the price formation process, will be discussed in Part II of this essay. Part I lays the foundations through a critique of the key proposals made by Nove and Mandel.

Though this essay is about forms of economic co-ordination, its starting point is neither the market nor the plan, but the production and reproduction of labour power. In a capitalist economy the guiding thread is the production and reproduction of capital; the creative power of human beings and the expression and development of needs become subordinate to the drive for profit. The guiding thread of a socialist economy must be the production and reproduction of labour power. To give this priority requires transformations in relations to the means of production and to the means of consumption; transformations within places of work, and within households; transformations in relations between producers and consumers. The touchstone for judging any particular form of economic

³ For comments on an earlier draft, I would like to thank participants at seminars at the University of Manchester, and at *New Left Review*. Particular thanks for detailed suggestions to Andrew Glyn, Ben Fine, Geoff Hodgson and Ian Steedman.

⁴ E. Mandel, 'In Defence of Socialist Planning', *New Left Review* 159, September–October 1986, and 'The Myth of Market Socialism', *NLR* 169, May–June 1988. See also P. Devine, 'Market Mania of the Left', *Marxism Today*, June 1988, and *Democracy and Economic Planning*, Oxford 1988.

⁵ K. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, *NLU/Penguin*, Harmondsworth 1976, p. 165.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17839.

co-ordination will be its implications for the process of production and reproduction of labour power. This is a wider view than the traditional socialist focus on workers, which tends to look chiefly at the implications for labour power in the paid labour process. This is certainly an important dimension, and the way in which labour power is used up clearly has powerful effects on the requirements for its reproduction. But, as feminists have always argued, unpaid labour processes in the household and the community are at the heart of the production and reproduction of labour power. 'Producers' has to be given a wider meaning than 'workers in paid labour'—a meaning which takes account of the fact that every producer was once a child, and will someday find their power reduced through ill-health and age. Defenders of socialist planning have placed far more emphasis than have advocates of market socialism on the implications of forms of co-ordination for labour, but, with a few exceptions, they have tended to take a narrowly 'workerist' view of labour.⁵ In contrast, I shall give the household a central role.

I. Nove's Market Socialism and Mandel's Socialist Planning

Nove's advocacy of market socialism⁶ is undertaken in the name of realism: actually existing socialism has foundered because of the deficiencies of central planning, and the Marxist tradition has only utopian or plain mistaken guidelines to offer. The only feasible solution is to reduce the role of central planning and increase the role of the market.

Nove's Dual Economy

In Nove's view, the only realizable socialist economy is a dual economy: a dominant sector which is organized through 'a system of binding instructions from planning offices' (p. 44), and a large, though subordinate, sector which is organized through markets. The main feature that differentiates such an economy from a capitalist 'mixed economy' is the absence of any large-scale private ownership of the means of production. The economy is made up of three types of enterprise: state-owned, co-operatives, and individually owned businesses. Choice and democracy largely depend on the operation of the market and a political system in which the planners are responsible to an elected assembly. There is some concern for the transformation of the social and material relations of production, but not of exchange, distribution and consumption. There is not much focus on the reorganization of the labour process beyond an advocacy of small firms, and none on the reorganization of the relations between the production of goods and services and the production and reproduction of labour power.

This neglect is not specific to Nove: most of the discussion of the organization of a socialist economy has the same productionist bias. It is concerned with the transformation of the relations of production in the workplace, but fails to rethink the relations between production and

⁵ Among the exceptions is Greater London Council, *The London Labour Plan*, 1988.

⁶ A. Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, London 1983. Unless otherwise stated, references to Nove are to this book. But see also A. Nove, 'Markets and Socialism', *NLR* 161, January–February 1987.

consumption between workplace and households; and to consider the way in which consumption and the reproduction of labour power need to be reorganized. A feminist approach to the question of socialist economy would make the articulation of production of goods and services and reproduction of labour power absolutely central. This requires, among other things, a rethinking of how households acquire goods and services from outside organizations; of who does the work of shopping, acquiring a place to live, liaising with schools and medical services, and so on, and through what kind of social and material relationships. Nove, along with most writers on the topic, does not consider this. There is some discussion of the transformation of production, but the nexus between enterprises and households would remain either the market or hierarchical administrative systems; and the initiative would remain with the producing organizations in determining the design of goods and services to be used by households.

There is no sign of the politics of use values, or of popular participation in planning through direct cooperation between organizations of producers and the households which use their products.⁷ Nove places little value on self-organization at the grass roots and is particularly suspicious of the role of trade unions, which are seen as obstacles to necessary economic reforms in both capitalist and socialist countries. Public action, for members of Nove's socialist society, seems to be confined to buying, selling, and voting.

Thus Nove's conception of socialism emphasizes formal ownership and is defined primarily in terms of an *absence* of large-scale capitalist enterprise. The advantages that he claims for his form of socialist economy are flexibility, efficiency, choice and an avoidance of the excesses either of untrammelled capitalism or of untrammelled centralized planning.⁸ As Mandel points out, Nove does not grapple with the question of flexibility for whom, efficiency for whom, choice for whom. In a capitalist economy these all operate in favour of capital. Efficiency means efficiency in profit-making: from the point of view of labour it may mean *higher* costs in terms of time and effort, for so-called efficiency gains are often bought by transferring tasks from paid labour to unpaid labour, or by intensifying paid labour. It may mean higher costs in terms of ill-health, for health and safety precautions cost money. Mandel's solution, as we shall see, prioritizes the needs of people in producing goods and services and tends to ignore the needs of people using those goods and services in producing and reproducing labour power. But we have to face the difficult fact of some tension, even in the absence of private enterprise, between the producers and users of a good. Flexibility, efficiency and choice for the user may mean disruption, stress and uncertainty for the producer. A satisfactory response has to propose some ways of negotiating these tensions: this is the essence of the politics of use values. But Mandel and

⁷ Such concerns have been at the heart of recent municipal socialism in Britain. See M. Mackintosh and H. Wainwright, eds., *A Taste of Power: The Politics of Local Economics*, Verso, London 1987.

⁸ Other recent writings on the organization of a socialist economy have reached similar conclusions about the virtues and inescapability of the market. Geoff Hodgson, for instance, who pays much more attention than Nove to issues of workers' participation in the organization of production and the democratization of planning, also insists that 'the decentralization of control over industry inevitably means the establishment of a market mechanism: no realistic alternative has been found' (*The Democratic Economy*, Harmondsworth 1984, p. 174).

Nove both propose one-sided responses: Mandel from the point of view of the producer, Nove, from the point of view of the consumer. To postulate an opposition between 'producer' and 'consumer' is in any case artificial, for we are all both. But to recognize this does not dissolve the tension. In this essay I shall discuss this tension in terms of interactions between two different kinds of social institutions, enterprises and households. Enterprises and households both engage in buying and selling, for households sell labour power and enterprises buy labour power and other inputs. Both institutions therefore have a 'consumer' and a 'producer' aspect.

Nove offers little detailed discussion of what markets actually are; how they function in capitalism, how they are to be organized in socialism. The image that does emerge from the few scattered references is a system of 'freely chosen negotiated contracts' (p. 44) or of bargaining between suppliers and customers. For example: 'The large majority of goods and services can only be effectively priced in the process of negotiation between supplier and customer, the bargain including detailed specifications of delivery dates, quality and so on. We must naturally expect the producing enterprises to try to "administer" prices; and wholesale and retail organizations would seek to obtain the "markup" they regard as proper, but in the absence of shortages and the presence of choice the buyers can refuse, can go elsewhere, can bargain. In other words, competition should prevent abuse of producers' powers' (p. 210).

An Unrealistic Model

This 'bargaining model' is not a realistic description of a modern market economy in which, as is widely recognized among economists, fix-price markets predominate. Of course, the choices of buyers indirectly constrain pricing—firms cannot just set any price they like. But whereas buyers face given prices, sellers set prices, and the choice of price strategy is a specialist managerial function. Thus, for instance, households do not typically negotiate prices with retailers; in cases where they may negotiate, for instance with a builder or decorator, ability to get a good bargain depends on ability to deploy considerable resources of time and knowledge. In the great majority of cases, choice can only be exercised within a pre-specified set of goods at pre-specified prices, which households are free only to take or leave, in conditions in which large resources are expended by enterprises to mould household preferences and to control household knowledge of product characteristics. Households are not in a position to employ specialized purchasing officers to ensure they get the 'best buy'. As Joan Robinson argued, 'No one who has lived in the capitalist world is deceived by the pretence that the market system ensures consumers' sovereignty. It is up to socialist economies to find some way of giving it a reality.'⁹ She went on to suggest that for a socialist economy. 'The best hope seems to be to develop a class of functionaries, playing the role of wholesale dealers, whose career and self-respect depend upon satisfying the consumer. They could keep in touch with demand through the shops; market research, which in the capitalist world

⁹ J. Robinson, 'Consumer's Sovereignty in a Planned Economy', in A. Nove and D. Nun, *Socialist Economics*, Harmondsworth 1972

is directed to finding out how to bamboozle the housewife, could be directed to discovering what she really needs; design and quality could be imposed upon manufacturing enterprises and the product mix settled by placing orders in such a way as to hold a balance between economies of scale and variety of taste.'

Robinson is one of the few economists to have considered that the reorganization of shopping is just as much an element of the socialist process as the reorganization of production. The importance of her comment lies not in the particular solution she offers, but in her recognition that transforming the link between households and the production process is a vital aspect of socialism. Nove does not consider her approach nor make any suggestions of his own about how to improve the bargaining power of households in relation to suppliers, because he relies on 'competition' to solve this problem. But what exactly does he mean by competition? It is instructive to consider the example he gives: 'Suppose that there are sixteen or more firms (socialized and co-operative) engaged in providing some goods and services. Let it be wool cloth, toothpaste, ball-bearings, holiday hotels or whatever. They base their productive activities on negotiations with their customers. The latter can choose from whom to obtain the goods or services they require. All can obtain from *their* suppliers, whom *they* can choose, the inputs needed to make production possible. They have a built-in interest in satisfying the customer, and so no special measures are required to ensure this (apart from 'normal' regulations about pure food, non-adulteration, correct labelling etc)' (p. 204).

This is a very idealized view of competition: standard products; implicit assumptions of adequate knowledge and capacity to negotiate on the part of all buyers; no differentiation between final consumption goods like toothpaste and producer goods like ball-bearings and, most important of all, no discussion of the dynamics of competition. The implication is that the happy state of affairs of sixteen producing enterprises vying with each other to attract customers through keeping prices low and quality high will persist over time. No consideration is given to more predatory forms of competition: mergers, take-over bids, strategies aimed at bankrupting competitors; nor to measures to restrict competition through collusion between suppliers. The dynamic of centralization and concentration in competitive markets, emphasized by Marx, Schumpeter and Kalecki amongst many others, does not feature at all. Competition is treated as the antithesis of monopoly, not as a potential generator of monopoly; as a process that keeps in check the power of enterprises rather than enhancing it.

Nove's idealized notion is perhaps not surprising given that he has spent a lifetime studying Russian and Eastern European economies in which markets and competition have largely been absent.²⁰ The picture that emerges from empirical studies of capitalist economies, however, is very

²⁰ In Yugoslavia, where the role of the market has been much greater than in other countries of 'actually existing socialism', there is evidence of concentration and centralization. In 1970 the 130 largest enterprises in manufacturing and mining accounted for 45.1 per cent of total sales and 33.7 per cent of total employment. By 1977 these shares had risen to 70.1 per cent and 48.3 per cent. From 1965 to 1967, 12 per cent of all Yugoslav enterprises were involved in mergers, and merger activity continued in the seventies (A. Zimbalist and H.J. Sherman, *Comparing Economic Systems*, Orlando 1984, p. 439). Although Nove does discuss some shortcomings of the Yugoslav experience, this is not one that he mentions

different. There is overwhelming evidence to support the notion of centralization and concentration: this does not mean that small firms are eliminated, but that large firms predominate, while small firms play subcontractor, or purely localized roles. Evidence of stability in the ratio of value-added (sales minus purchases from other firms) to sales for US firms¹¹ does not undermine this conclusion: firms are indeed involved in active trade with other firms. But a great deal of this is not 'arms length' trade through impersonal markets: rather it is trade between a large 'core' firm and its periphery of subordinate subcontractors. Concentration and centralization is certainly a dynamic process: reference to it should not be taken to imply support for the analytical idea of 'monopoly capitalism' and a tendency to stagnation. Nor does it preclude competition from new entrants in particular niches: Amstrad can indeed challenge IBM in the market for personal computers—but only by conforming to technical standards set by IBM. No individual entrepreneur, however dynamic, can hope to challenge IBM in mainframe computers.

Predatory competition leading to centralization and concentration means that the conditions of production and reproduction of labour power are more and more determined by the accumulation strategies of large firms; and that the distinction between households and enterprises becomes more and more pronounced. It is less and less possible for the majority of households to sell anything but their labour power. If the role of central authorities is to be limited to setting the 'normal regulations' within which prices and quantities are determined by private interactions between buyers and sellers, what is to impede the interests of producing enterprises dominating over those of households both as consumers, and as sellers of labour power? Nove's 'feasible socialism' is more utopian than at first sight it appears.

Neglect of Markets as Institutions and Processes

Nove is not alone among participants in the debate about socialist economy in paying little attention to what a market actually is and how markets actually work. Most of the considerable literature on the theory of economic co-ordination, and plans vs markets, fails to consider markets as social and material institutions.¹² Instead one or more of three favourite images is invoked: Nove's bargaining model; an auction in which buyers or sellers bid against one another; and a broker-organized market in which a broker offers to buy and sell stock at given buying and selling prices to which those who wish to acquire or dispose of stock react. But these images are peculiarly insubstantial. The fact that markets require resources to operate is not generally regarded as germane to the debate on the co-ordination of economic systems.¹³ In sharp contrast, the magnitude of the resources required for socialist planning has always been entered into the argument as a factor against it. The vast numbers of sales personnel, marketing experts, advertising executives, stockbrokers

¹¹ See P. Aberbach, M. Desai, A. Shamasovani, 'The Dialectic of Market and Planning', NLR 170, 1988.

¹² This lack has recently been discussed by G. Hodgson, *Economics and Institutions*, Oxford 1988, and L.M. Lachmann, *The Market as an Economic Process*, Oxford 1986.

¹³ Among the few exceptions are S. Moss, *An Economic Theory of Business Strategy: An Essay on Dynamic Irregular Equilibrium*, London 1981, and D. Helm, 'Price Formation and the Costs of Exchange', in M. Baranzini and R. Scanziani, eds., *Foundations of Economics*, Oxford 1986.

etc. required to make markets operate has generally been ignored,¹⁴ as has been the number of employees engaged on planning activities within private enterprises themselves.¹⁵ Thus, for instance, Hayek postulated economy in the production of information as a decisive advantage for market allocation over planned allocation.¹⁶ But as Helm points out, Hayek was making an implicit assumption that the market provides information costlessly. However, auctioneers, brokers and sales personnel have to eat—their activities require resources. They do not have perfect knowledge; they have to collect information. Too often the claim for the superiority of market allocation has been based on a comparison between a market system with exogenously or costlessly given prices and a planned system with a multitude of visible administrative costs; and the question of exactly how markets work has not been asked.

A market is a cash nexus between buyers and sellers, but this nexus does not just exist; it has to be made. A market implies one or more agents who act as market makers, setting prices and providing information about supply and demand; bringing buyers and sellers together. In Walrasian general equilibrium theory, which has dominated thinking by both socialists and liberals on economic co-ordination, the market-maker is a 'ghostly' auctioneer who stands outside the economic process, and is not a profit-seeker. The Austrian school, to which Hayek belongs, has a more robust attitude, seeing markets as made by profit-seeking agents, entrepreneurs, merchants and financiers. But neither pays much attention to the fact that making markets requires control of means of trade, such as credit, communications, transport, warehousing and information.

In a capitalist economy markets are primarily private, in the sense that the means of trade required to make markets is largely controlled by profit-seeking enterprises. To be sure, there is government intervention in markets, government regulation and guidance, and provision of some of the infrastructure required for trade, such as roads. But intervention and regulation simply seeks to influence the terms on which capitalist enterprises exercise their power to make markets; it leaves market-makers with enormous capacities for evasion and for 'regulatory capture' in which the state agency ostensibly regulating the market becomes instead an advocate for the market-makers.

In most discussion of the marketization of socialism, there is advocacy of the devolution of market-making to self-financing enterprises, who must recoup the costs of market-making through sales. Such a market is also private in the sense of being made by individual enterprises, according to criteria which enhance their individual surpluses. Prices are set in such private markets (whether capitalist or socialist) by specific agents,

¹⁴ One study of a Yugoslav textile firm's response to the 1965 reforms showed that its marketing department expanded from fewer than 12 to 39 people within one year. The need to respond more rapidly to the unstable market and the effort to influence market conditions led to the growing concentration of decision-making in the hands of an enlarged middle management, in spite of formal provisions for worker participation. Zimbalist and Sherman, *op cit.*, p. 439.

¹⁵ R. Murray, 'Ownership, Control and the Market', *NLR* 164, July–August 1987, quotes an estimate that 175,000 people are engaged in various aspects of 'private enterprise' planning in London alone, including economists, accountants, investment analysts, designers and corporate planners, without even counting ancillary staff like secretaries and data processors.

¹⁶ F. von Hayek, 'Economics and Knowledge', *Economics*, new series 4, 1937.

price-makers. Other agents in the market react to these prices: they are price-takers. Markets operate to publicize the prices set by price-makers; and the responses of price-takers determine the sustainability of prices set. Determination of prices in such markets does not necessarily imply continuously fluctuating prices. Some markets, such as financial and primary product markets, do give rise to fluctuating prices (flex-price markets). But the markets for most manufactured goods are characterized by price lists which are changed from time to time, but certainly not daily (fix-price markets).

Prices can only provide useful signals if decision-makers can form some ideas as to whether current price levels are 'normal' or not. If they are regarded as 'abnormal', they will not be expected to persist and decisions will be taken accordingly. Market institutions have the important function of establishing norms: usually trading is structured and information published selectively by a limited number of market-makers in a way that helps the formation of price expectations and norms, a practice often known as 'orderly trading'.¹⁷ Thus, price-setting by a limited number of market-makers performs the useful function of establishing price 'norms', without which decision-making in an uncertain world would be extremely difficult. But the performance of this useful function gives the price-setters disproportionate influence on what happens: real-world historical processes are 'path dependent' and the price-setters have the initiative in defining the starting point. As Lachmann puts it, 'it matters who sets prices and who takes them.' The process of production and reproduction of labour power is, of course, primarily a 'price-taking' process.

Criticisms of the Market

Mandel's alternative to both market and central plan involves a system of 'articulated workers' self-management' that attempts to supply a non-market, decentralized system of co-ordination. While I agree with Mandel that a socialist economy should aim to go beyond market co-ordination, and that there are decentralized ways of doing this, his particular solution is deeply unsatisfactory. The central weakness of Mandel's approach is that he not only rejects markets, he also rejects prices. I shall argue that a decentralized socialist economy needs a decentralized price mechanism, but that this does not imply price formation through private markets (i.e., does not imply prices being set by enterprises acting as market-makers).

What then is wrong with market co-ordination? Some of the most common points are that it means production for profit rather than for need; that it is the antithesis of co-operation; that it is impersonal and 'blind'; that it is a way of disciplining workers; and that it leads to economic instability because it provides no way of knowing beforehand whether what is produced will be sold. But unless such arguments are much more carefully specified, it is easy for defenders of the market to dismiss them.

Market co-ordination, its defenders argue, does lead to the satisfaction of needs because it allows consumer choice. Profitability is an indicator of

¹⁷ For a further discussion of this point see Hodgson, *Economics and Institutions*, p. 185

the extent to which production is meeting needs. Of course, the needs being met are those which are backed by the necessary purchasing power, but if the problem is that poor people cannot express their needs in the market to the same extent as rich people, then the solution is to change the distribution of purchasing power through taxation and benefits, and changes in the ownership of means of production, not to abolish the market. Market co-ordination, it is claimed, does facilitate co-operation and mutuality because it satisfies the common interests of buyers and sellers in making a sale and a purchase.¹⁸

The impersonality of market co-ordination can be claimed as a benefit, a defence of individual freedom and a bulwark against personalized tyranny. It will be pointed out that any decentralized decision-making mechanism is 'blind' in the sense that the outcome is not consciously willed by participants but emerges from the aggregation of their individual decisions. Thus in an election each voter votes for the candidate of their choice but the outcome is the result of the 'blind' operation of the particular aggregation method. The need for a way of maintaining work discipline in any economic system will be stressed, as will the possibility of a mismatch between demand and supply in any complex economy. What matters, it will be argued, is not preventing such a mismatch but having an adequate mechanism to correct it. The market is a good adjustment mechanism, it is claimed—this was indeed the decisive benefit of the 'invisible hand' for Adam Smith, who was concerned not with the achievement of the static Pareto optimal general equilibrium that has tended to dominate discussion of the market as a system of co-ordination by neo-classical economists in the twentieth century, but with the reallocation of resources in the right direction when supply and demand conditions changed.¹⁹ If the market adjustment mechanism is too slow in operating, it will be suggested, the resulting macro-economic problems of unemployment or inflation can be dealt with by suitable fiscal and monetary policy, supplemented by intervention to improve the speed of operation of the mechanism. So, defenders of the market will conclude, none of the objections is decisive. Socialists should take advantage of the market as an instrument that permits decentralized and flexible decision-making and motivates individuals to satisfy the public interest through pursuing their own interests.

Decision-Making and Markets

Socialists certainly should recognize the progressive aspect of market co-ordination. Marx clearly did: his writings contain passages which are almost paeans of praise for the way markets swept away the ties of personal dependency characteristic of feudalism, and ample recognition of the way markets can facilitate the mutual satisfaction of needs. But, as Marx also stressed, markets are not simply instruments of freedom and agency for individuals and of co-operation between individuals: even idealized markets as envisaged by Nove can in their turn exercise a power

¹⁸ However, as Sen points out, although markets do work on a basis of some congruence of interests, the market mechanism is useless for resolving the conflicts of interest between buyer and seller on the distribution of the benefits of trade. A. K. Sen, *Resources, Values and Development*, Oxford 1984, pp. 93–94.

¹⁹ Hayek also stresses the dynamic benefits of the market mechanism and rejects Pareto optimality as a framework for evaluation.

over individuals, a power that Marx called the 'fetishism of commodities', and which appears in popular discourse as 'market forces'.

This arises because markets do not simply decentralize decision-making; they atomize it. For in the fundamental market relation, the cash nexus, each decision-making unit is disconnected from other decision-making units and is connected only to quantities and prices of goods. (This applies whether the decision-maker is a price-taker or a price-maker.) A graphic illustration is provided by the City dealer who issues buying and selling instructions in front of a video display of share prices. But even when market institutions do not separate them physically, buyers and sellers are nevertheless isolated one from another in the sense that the market mechanism as such, the cash nexus, provides no direct information to individual buying and selling units about the intentions and values of others. Each has to act separately in ignorance of what others intend to do, and must wait for the preferences of others to be revealed by the way in which prices and quantities change. Individual units in these circumstances have little basis for estimating beforehand what difference, if any, their decisions will make to the overall outcome. (This problem is avoided in much economic reasoning by assuming that the decision-maker is marginal—i.e., that the choices each makes have no impact on market outcomes.) The significance of individual decisions for the overall outcome only becomes apparent *after* they have been made, when prices, and levels of stocks, output and employment change. It is only through the changes in prices and quantities produced that the interconnection is made between different decision-makers: 'the relationships between the producers... take on the form of a social relation between products of labour'.²⁰ Compare this with decision-making in a committee or a team, where each participant can find out about the intentions and preferences of other participants before a decision is reached.

The isolation of the decision-makers means that the question each considers is: what should I do to serve my interests best, knowing the current price and availability of goods, but not knowing what others intend to do and would be prepared to do? The answer is not necessarily the same as that which would be given to a rather different question—what should I do to serve my interests best, knowing the current price and availability of goods, and also knowing what others intend to do and would be prepared to do? This is the heart of the 'isolation paradox', which has provided a basis for the discussion of individuated and collective decision-making in contemporary welfare economics.²¹ It arises because the choices that each one of us considers appropriate for us are not independent of the choices which others intend to make, when the satisfaction yielded by the choice of each depends upon the choices that others have made. The market mechanism does not transmit to us direct information about intentions, desires and values; it only transmits information about the outcomes of decisions taken in the dark. The appropriate sense in which the market mechanism can be described as 'blind' is that it does not lighten our darkness. Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, which to economists often seems one of the most opaque concepts he deploys, can

²⁰ Marx, *op cit*, p. 164.

²¹ See, for instance, A. K. Sen, *op cit*, introduction and ch. 4.

be seen as a dramatic metaphor for the isolation problem—'the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things'.²² In markets, decision-makers cannot make a direct connection with the wishes, aspirations, and values of others. Instead the wishes, aspirations and values of others become translated into market prices and quantities which seem to operate with the force of nature, and to which each decision-making unit must adjust without any opportunity for collective social reflection and discussion which might lead to a different set of choices. Market outcomes are thus felt as an external coercive pressure to which individuals must adjust; and market procedures offer no channels for decision-makers to reconsider their choice *before* committing themselves to sales and purchases, in the light of the aggregate outcome that would be the likely consequence of a particular pattern of choices, nor jointly to consider with others changes in objectives.

This problem is not perceived when it is assumed that there are no interdependencies between the satisfaction yielded by one person's choice and the choices made by others. Such interdependencies are assumed to be unimportant special cases in much economic theory. Environmentalists have shown us just how pervasive interdependencies are, but they have tended to concentrate on physical interdependencies such as pollution and traffic congestion. Paretian welfare economics—the framework within which economics students are typically taught to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the market mechanism—is willing to contemplate government intervention in markets to deal with problems like pollution. However, it is unable even to recognize another type of interdependency which arises not because of the absence of markets (the reason for interdependencies such as pollution), but because of the sequential disequilibrium character of any real-time market process (even that of a futures market) in which individuals must take decisions, in isolation, at some point in time before the enjoyment of the fruits of those decisions. In the gap between the taking of the decision and the enjoyment of its fruits, many changes may take place because of the intervening decisions of others, which affect the pay-off. Such interdependency pervades decisions about the use of labour power and investment decisions, but the market mechanism fails to provide a way of expressing this interdependency.²³

When there are pervasive interdependencies between decisions taken by different people (or groups of people), then even from the point of view of self-interest, there are immense advantages to public-spirited decision-making.²⁴ It is self-defeating for each decision-maker to pursue only their own self-interest, the immediate pay-off, and not also the repercussions of their choices for others and for the viability of institutions. However, the market does not facilitate public-spirited decision-making, and indeed tends to undermine it.

In market economies decision-makers do not in fact rest content with

²² Marx, *op cit*, p. 165.

²³ This type of interdependency has been called a 'pecuniary' or 'dynamic' externality. See T. Scitovsky, 'Two Concepts of External Economies', *Journal of Political Economy*, 1954.

²⁴ For more detailed discussion of this point see F. Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth*, London 1977, esp. ch. 10.

'atomization' and the absence of direct information about the intentions of others. As Marx noted: 'Together with the development of this alienation, and on the same basis, efforts are made to overcome it: institutions emerge whereby each individual can acquire information about the activity of all others and attempt to adjust his own accordingly, e.g. lists of current prices, rates of exchange, interconnections between those active in commerce through the mails, telegraphs etc.'²⁵ Trade associations are formed; decision-makers swap information about their plans at business lunches; markets are surrounded by a whole network of non-market contacts which are not mediated by money. However, the extent and quality of co-operative interchange between enterprises of the kind of information that the cash nexus cannot provide is limited by the search for competitive advantage, as at least some advocates of market socialism recognize.²⁶ Information flows are fragmented; there is a lack of open access to information networks; there is waste of resources as information-gathering activities have to be duplicated in the interests of secrecy. Or, to use the modes of expression deployed by Marx in the *Grundrisse*, co-operative attempts to overcome the alienation of the market do not, in a market economy, transcend that alienation; rather they are limited by it. So, market outcomes still impinge as external forces on individuals.

The Process of Adjustment and the Production and Reproduction of Labour Power

The degree of concern that is felt with regard to market forces depends upon beliefs about the ease and stability of adjustment, and about the extent to which there are alternatives to the atomized co-ordination which markets provide. If it is relatively easy for individuals to adjust their sales and purchases in stabilizing fashion in response to changing economic conditions and if they have open to them a multiplicity of attractive options, then there is not so much cause for concern about the coercive pressures of the market.

Advocates of the market tend to believe that provided the operation of the market is not impeded, adjustment is relatively easy, though they do not all base this belief on the same theory. For instance, Walrasian general equilibrium theory (the intellectual foundation of neo-classical economics) incorporates the comforting assumption that individuals can adjust their plans to produce or consume in response to price signals *before* they actually buy and sell and commit resources to production. Their repeated responses to varying price signals reveal their preferences, thus overcoming the problem of their lack of knowledge of each other's intentions. The assumption is that the market behaves as if it were co-ordinated by a (costless) auctioneer. When the market opens, the auctioneer calls out a set of prices at random, and the participants in the market decide what they would want to buy and sell at these prices. They pass this information (costlessly) to the auctioneer, who then works out a new set of prices, lower for goods in excess supply and higher for those in excess demand.

²⁵ Marx, *Grundrisse*, NLR/Penguin, Harmondsworth 1973, p. 161

²⁶ 'In the sphere of the competitive market — trust and long-term cooperation, whilst present to some degree, are undermined by competition between the many different and transient agents. In the market there is a changing and volatile population, where each individual is pursuing his or her objectives largely in accord with the overt calculus of profit and loss' (Hodgson, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 220)

Everyone then decides again what they would want to buy and sell, and the sequence is continued until a set of prices is reached which clears the market, equating demand with supply. Only then do sales and purchases actually take place. Thus, the problems associated with sequential atomized decision-making are avoided: the auctioneer co-ordinates the decision-making, and actual sales and purchases are simultaneous and not sequential. Production only takes place once everyone is aware of what the implications of plans will be. The adjustment process thus implied is a fictitious process that takes place outside real time.²⁷

The Austrian School (Menger, von Mises, Hayek, and their modern followers, such as Lachmann and Kirzner) offer a more robust account in which the entrepreneur rather than the auctioneer plays the hero's role. Adjustment is sequential rather than simultaneous, and takes place through entrepreneurs' actions to arbitrate, speculate or innovate. The emphasis is on the versatility and flexibility of human beings rather than on the constraints that they face. Representatives of this school have a tendency to over-generalize from the ease with which merchants may switch from buying to selling, or financiers from one industry to another, glossing over the difficulties of turning swords into ploughshares, or miners into electronics engineers. Dismissing the static equilibrium concept which is central to neo-classical economics, they emphasize uncertainty and change. But the Austrian school still incorporates the idea of a tendency towards equilibrium produced by rivalrous entrepreneurs bidding up prices when demand is greater than supply, and bidding them down when supply is greater than demand.²⁸ In fact, in the majority of markets there are good reasons for prices not to move in market-clearing directions. When agents in a particular market are permanently either buyers or sellers, rather than switching between the two roles; when buyers and sellers value continuity in their relations with one another; and when shopping is a costly process; then it may be quite rational for enterprises not to reduce prices when demand falls, and even to raise prices in the face of falling demand.²⁹ But, as Lachmann admits, Austrian economists have failed to provide an account of how prices are actually formed or to discuss the relation between price-setters and price-takers in markets. The possibility that rivalry between entrepreneurs could produce adjustment failures is not considered.

Neither school sees a need to distinguish labour from other factors of production in the adjustment process. Market-led adjustment implies a reduction of most people engaged in production to the status of mere factors of production, to be deployed so as to secure the most profitable output. It means treating people merely instrumentally, not as ends in themselves. The market does not encourage me to relate to others as fellow-citizens, members of the same community, who have a multiplicity of goals besides buying products, but only as factors in production processes that have produced the goods available to me to buy. I am able to buy these goods because I have acquired purchasing power through

²⁷ For a critical discussion of this concept of adjustment, see G. Duménil and D. Lévy, 'The Classical and the Neo-Classical: a Rejoinder to Frank Hahn', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 9 no. 4, 1985.

²⁸ For a comparison of neo-classical and Austrian approaches, see D. Lavoye, *Rivalry and Central Planning*, Cambridge 1985.

²⁹ See, for instance, A. Okun, *Prices and Quantities: A Microeconomic Analysis*, Washington 1981.

selling my labour power as a factor in the production of goods for someone else. This is what is meant by Marx's claim that in a market economy the relationships between the producers take on the form of a social relation between things, 'a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers'.

Of course, people resist reduction to the same status as robots. They do not passively adjust to changes in demand and supply. They try to change the parameters in their favour; to acquire and exercise market power; to be less at the mercy of market forces. Those with more education, skills, resources, connections, organization are more successful, those with least bear the brunt of the burdens of adjustment. This resistance is frequently deplored by advocates of market co-ordination who argue that the resistance itself increases the burdens of adjustment; that if only people would accept that there is no alternative, the costs would be less.

The irony is that any economy peopled exclusively by such passive agents would be far from successful. For instance, technical progress depends on people trying to change parameters, not accepting that there is no alternative; high levels of productivity depend on people exercising imagination, initiative and forethought, even on the most routine assembly-line; people need to feel some attachment to their occupation, some pride and satisfaction in their job, if standards of quality are to be high. The class answer to this is to allow a privileged part of the workforce—entrepreneurs, managers, scientific researchers, university lecturers etc.—to exercise the initiative and imagination; and to require the mass of the workforce to be passive adaptors. When they refuse such passivity, the only option most of them have in shaping the production process is to be defensive obstructors of adjustment. The class answer is obviously not a solution to those who are genuinely interested in achieving a socialist society.

A further irony is that no economy can adjust solely through a market-led adjustment process because there are key resources which cannot be fully commodified. The most important are labour and the environment. Although labour power may be bought and sold, it is not fully commodified because it is not produced as a commodity. Although economic costs and benefits do play a role in decisions to have children, children are not generally treated simply as an economic resource, to be discarded if the balance of costs and benefits changes. Machines may be scrapped and crops burned if they become unprofitable, but except in extreme cases, once children have been born they will be treated to some extent as ends in themselves, not simply as economic resources, and will be nurtured if at all possible. A market economy requires altruistic, collective behaviour in the household, and a resource allocation pattern that is not determined wholly in response to price signals.³⁰ The patriarchal answer to this is to encourage women to be altruistic self-sacrificers for the general household good, with their unpaid labour providing a flexible cushioning that permits men to respond to market signals. This answer must be firmly rejected by socialists, not because we want to discourage altruistic, collective forms of behaviour, but because we want to encourage them in conditions of all-round dependence rather than one-sided

³⁰ N. Folbre, 'Cleaning House: New Perspectives on Households and Economic Development', *Journal of Development Economics*, vol. 22, 1986.

dependence.³¹ The adjustment process in a market economy, in which there are substantial inequalities within the paid labour process and the household, thus depends on those with greater power being able to persuade or coerce those with less to be passive adaptors or altruistic self-sacrificers; the self-determination that comes from taking initiatives, so much celebrated by the Austrian School, is reserved for the few.

Micro-Foundations of Macro-Problems

Besides the behavioural requirements for successful market-led adjustment, there are also the problems of the quality of the outcome and the stability of the sequence. The atomized decision-making of the market enables choice to be made between alternative, piecemeal, marginal adjustments, but not between alternative states of the world: choice in the small does not provide choice in the large. This is particularly important for environmental issues. Hirsch gives the following example: 'As public transport deteriorates, we are given an extra incentive to use our own private mode of transport which in turn results in further deterioration and a worsened position of public vis-à-vis private transportation. The choice is posed at each stage in a dynamic process; there is no choice of selection between the states at either end of that process.'³² The gap between micro-rationality and macro-rationality which atomized sequential decision-making opens up has particularly important implications for the overall stability of market systems; that is, for whether the adjustment process will tend to converge on some stable equilibrium or whether it will lead to over-shooting, to booms followed by busts, to sudden destructive adjustment through crises, to prolonged periods of stagnation.

Even the most ardent advocates of the market would recognize the existence of problems like the pig-cycle.³³ Many would also recognize problems of instability in financial markets, which have played a major role in generating the current unsustainable and unrepayable burden of Third World debt, and the recent long boom and sudden crash on the world's stock markets. As a postmortem in the *Financial Times* put it, 'Share price falls of 20 per cent in a day make a mockery of academic claims that stock markets are "efficient".' This instability is closely linked to the ways in which a sequential atomized decision-making process deals with uncertainty. The problem is that the steps which an isolated decision-maker in a sequential process takes to limit his or her risks, may increase the risk to which the system as a whole is subject. Thus floating interest rates, syndicated loans and cross-default clauses, which were all designed to reduce the risks facing any one bank lending to Third World governments, increased the risks to which the whole system of bank lending to Third World governments was subject.³⁴ Similarly, the existence of 'liquid' stock markets, on which it is possible to trade at any moment at little cost

³¹ The useful distinction between all-round and one-sided dependence is made by Marx in *The German Ideology*, London 1974, p. 55.

³² Hirsch, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³³ When the price of bacon is high farmers breed more pigs, when all the pigs are grown enough to be marketed for bacon, this pushes the price down and results in a reduction in pig breeding, which in turn leads to a rise in the price of bacon, and so on. Nove (*op. cit.*, p. 210) recognizes this problem and suggests that some basic agricultural products should be on the list of prices subject to control.

³⁴ H. Lever and C. Huboc, *Debt and Danger: The World Financial Crisis*, Harmondsworth 1983.

per transaction, limits the risks facing individual investors but increases the risks to which investment as a whole is subject. It was this factor which led Keynes to describe stock markets as 'casinos' and to propose that they should be inaccessible and expensive.³⁵ Since he wrote they have, of course, become much *more* accessible and cheaper, which is one reason why the speed of the fall in share prices in the crash of '87 was much faster than in the crash of '29.

The same problem of systemic risk—resulting from the attempts of atomized decision-makers, linked only by the cash nexus, each to reduce their own risk in isolation—is also the fundamental source of the macro-economic problem of deficient demand in a market economy. In the face of an uncertain future, isolated economic units attempt to maintain flexibility by holding money, which as generalized purchasing power is much more flexible than specific goods and services. This is the feature of a capitalist monetary economy which Keynes emphasized as liquidity preference. But the very flexibility that the social device of money permits to isolated economic units also makes a monetary economy composed of such units fundamentally volatile. Because of the flexibility conferred by holding money, individual units can quickly change their plans in response to a change simply in the state of expectations. 'Confidence' becomes a major determinant of the level of investment and capacity utilization. As Bhaduri puts it: 'Paradoxically, holding money as an *individual's option* to cope better with uncertainty may fail as a *social device*, by magnifying the influences of uncertainty on current economic activities.'³⁶

This negative aspect is much more likely to predominate in an economy in which money functions not simply as a medium of exchange and a store of value, but as capital; that is, as money which is held to facilitate the acquisition not of goods *per se* but of more money. Consider the way in which households use money. They exchange one type of good (say, labour power) for other types of goods (say food and clothing) by exchanging labour power for money, and money for food and clothing. The reproduction of this chain of sales and purchases depends to some extent on the state of expectations—the household may delay making purchases and hold on to its money, if it expects prices to fall, for instance. But the extent to which a household refrains from purchasing in the expectation of future price falls is limited by the fact that needs for food and clothing cannot be delayed beyond a certain point. If the larder is bare, food has to be bought today, even though next week it may cost less.

The situation is different for enterprises which are compelled to make profit their over-riding goal. They are not (and cannot be) interested in goods themselves. For them what matters above all is the money that appears in the bottom line of the balance-sheet. (As Henry Ford is reported to have said, he was not in the business of making cars, but of making money.) This can be expressed in Marx's concept of the circuit of money capital $M-C-M'$, in which the point is to exchange not one set of goods for another, but one sum of money for an even larger sum of money. The reproduction of this circuit is much more liable to be

³⁵ J. M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, London 1973, p. 159

³⁶ A. Bhaduri, *Macroeconomics—The Dynamics of Commodity Production*, London 1986, p. 91

interrupted by liquidity preference than is the chain of sales and purchases made by households. If an enterprise is not confident of selling its output, it makes more sense to hold on to money, rather than use it to buy means of production and labour power. No limit is set to its hoarding of cash by any need for goods in themselves—corporations do not need to eat. In such circumstances, money is fetishized, acquiring a life of its own.

Profit-seeking enterprises may hoard cash even if prices of inputs are falling—for instance, even if workers take cuts in money wages, and even if this leads to falls in the prices of other inputs. If the fall in prices generates expectations of a further fall in prices, then it is quite rational to continue to hold money and postpone expenditure.³⁷ So, no matter how flexible prices are and how quickly markets tend to move in a market-clearing direction, in a monetary economy there is no guarantee that Say's Law will hold. There is always a possibility of deficient demand. Mandel is quite right to insist that macro-economic problems are rooted in the market process.

The Keynesian Answer: Intervention in Markets

The Keynesian answer to the gap between micro-rationality and macro-rationality is for the state to intervene in markets as buyer, taxpayer, and lender of last resort so as to counteract the possibility of deficient demand—for instance, to supply more liquidity to offset an increase in liquidity preference which might otherwise lead to depression. But there are some problems inherent in market processes which cannot be overcome so simply. Intervention in markets changes the current parameters (prices, interest rates, exchange rates, tax rates, level of demand etc.) that market-makers and other decision-makers face, but not the characteristics of the market process itself. In particular, it does not change the social isolation of decision-makers, so that there remain overwhelming pressures for each to pursue their own interests in a myopic fashion, and to circumvent or subvert the changes introduced by central authorities.³⁸ Intervention in markets tends to be ineffective or extremely costly if agents in the market respond solely to piecemeal individual advantage; and yet the social isolation imposed by markets makes it difficult for individuals to do anything else. Intervention in markets provides no institutions to facilitate collective reflection before individual units take decisions.

This has become particularly apparent in the problem of how to deal with stagflation in the advanced industrialized countries. Conventional Keynesian fiscal and monetary remedies are unable to deal with a situation in which prices and wages are rising while output and employment are falling. This has opened the way for 'monetarist' policies to confront the problem by a combination of deflation and attempts to make markets more 'competitive', in the sense of more like the markets of Walrasian and Austrian theory, with prices falling as demand falls. Such policies impose enormous costs in terms of unemployment and wasted resources, and are ultimately self-defeating. Most markets fail to behave like those in Walrasian and Austrian theory not for lack of competition, but precisely

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91

³⁸ See Hirsch, *op. cit.*, ch. 9

because of the existence of competition. An accessible exposition of this point is provided by Okun, who concludes: '... the appropriate functioning of customer markets and career labour markets requires a marked departure from the price flexibility of the competitive model. Customers and suppliers, employees and firms develop methods of reducing price variation that help to perpetuate relations and minimize transaction costs over the long run.'³⁹ At the micro-level, there are good reasons for firms to raise wages and pass on increased costs in price increases while reducing output and employment. By doing so, they may be better able to maintain the co-operation and loyalty of their customers and workforce than by cutting wages and prices.

The policy conclusion commonly drawn from this type of reasoning is the need for Keynesian monetary and fiscal policy to be supplemented by some kind of incomes policy which will restrain firms from raising wages, and thus make it possible for conventional Keynesian policies to maintain a higher level of demand without running into the problem of inflation. However, this penalizes households in relation to enterprises if there is no complementary mechanism restraining prices. Recognizing this, some advocates of incomes policies also advocate price controls. But if the process of setting prices is left in the hands of enterprises, there still remains a fundamental imbalance: households cannot monitor price formation in a way that enables them to enforce restraint on enterprises in the same way that enterprises can monitor wage formation and enforce a wage restraint programme upon workers.⁴⁰ Moreover, the vital knowledge of unit costs and profit margins remains in the hands of enterprises, and without this Price Commissions have no teeth, and the implementation of price guidelines cannot be effectively monitored. This imbalance could only be removed by socializing the price formation process, making it transparent to households by making information on unit costs and profit margins public. Capitalist enterprises will always resist this, because secrecy gives them a competitive advantage and private ownership implies the right to withhold information. State-owned enterprises will also resist such disclosure if they are enjoined to focus their efforts on maximizing their own surpluses, and to relate to other enterprises, and to households, primarily through the market. It is not surprising that price formation is such an explosive issue in the marketization of socialism.

Thus, Keynesian policies of intervention in markets, of fiscal and monetary policy supplemented by incomes policies and price guidelines, cannot be relied on to overcome the macro-economic problems which are rooted in market processes. It is no use saying we will use the market to solve micro-level resource allocation problems and use Keynesian policies to overcome macro-level problems because the two sets of problems are intimately related. The market as an institution will tend to undermine the successful implementation of Keynesian policies.

'There Is No Third Way'

Nove does recognize many of these drawbacks of the market, but is

³⁹ Okun, *op cit*, p. 342. There is a growing literature on the macro-foundations of macro-economic problems, examining how problems like stagflation derive from the nature of market processes. See, for instance, S. Fisher, 'Recent Developments in Macroeconomics', *Economic Journal*, vol. 98 no. 396, June 1988.

⁴⁰ Okun, *op cit*, pp. 344-46.

convinced that we shall have to accept them because the market is the only alternative to bureaucracy. Co-ordination can take place only through a cash nexus or a rules nexus, or some combination of the two. However, a number of people have argued that another kind of nexus does exist and plays a vital role in economic co-ordination. For instance, Dietrich,⁴¹ rejecting the plans/market dichotomy, argues that both planning mechanisms and price mechanisms require for their operation a third kind of nexus, which he calls 'informal relationships'. He suggests that any kind of planning system, whether in private or public sector, cannot rely simply on its codified procedures. The bounded rationality of decision-makers means that informal relationships between them are necessary for the system to work: in support he cites studies of the internal operations of multinational corporations and of administrative systems. Similarly, within markets, the cash nexus is supplemented by informal relationships, the rationale for which is that independent decisions need not lead to optimal outcomes when economic units are interdependent. Okun⁴² refers to such informal relationships as an 'invisible handshake', in contrast to the 'invisible hand' of the market. The 'invisible handshake' is seen as an implicit contract or a moral commitment which helps to cement continuity in relations between buyers and sellers. Hannah, reviewing a book on business history, writes: 'Much in current developments in the analysis of economic success implies that neither Adam Smith's "invisible hand" of the market nor Alfred Chandler's "visible hand" of bureaucratic hierarchies can explain it. Rather, a "third hand" of networks and interrelationships—sometimes based on trust and reciprocity alone, and sometimes on webs of more easily observed and measured connections—appears to be an important component.'⁴³ Much of the literature on the economic success of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan makes a similar point: a nexus of trust, goodwill and reciprocity has played a vital role in national economic development.⁴⁴

Mandel's Third Way

Mandel also refers to such a nexus: he calls it 'objective informal co-operation' and stresses the value of continuity in buyer-seller relations, in a similar fashion to Okun.⁴⁵ However, Mandel goes beyond simply registering the existence of this third nexus; he argues that it is replacing the cash nexus and making prices economically irrelevant. I shall argue that this is not the case, but I share with Mandel, and the others mentioned above, the view that there is a third kind of co-ordinating nexus. The problem is not the absence of a third way; the problem is how to institutionalize it; and how to ensure that the co-operation is freely given, genuinely a product of trust and goodwill. In capitalist economies 'invisible handshake' may frequently be a misnomer for 'invisible arm twist'.

Mandel sees the problems of the market mechanism as stemming from the fact that it cannot achieve an *ex ante* equilibrium of supply and

⁴¹ M. Dietrich, 'Organisational Requirements of a Socialist Economy: Theoretical and Practical Suggestions', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1986.

⁴² Okun, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁴³ I. Hannah, 'Pully Interlocking', *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 July 1985.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, R. Dore, 'Goodwill and the Spirit of Market Capitalism', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1983.

⁴⁵ Mandel, 'In Defence of Socialist Planning', pp. 22-23.

demand before resources are actually committed to production. He considers it essential that the balancing out of consumer preferences and resource allocation should occur before production starts. The value of planning, in his eyes, is that it can achieve this goal, so that mismatches between supply and demand cannot occur. In effect, the planning system would play the same role as the Walrasian auctioneer. Like many other socialist economists, Mandel is implicitly accepting the neo-classical standard of general equilibrium as the goal against which to judge a socialist economy.⁴⁶

It is this way of posing the task that generates the enormous information requirements and the huge bunching of decision-making that have figured largely in the critique of socialist planning.⁴⁷ An 'ex ante equilibrium' approach to the task of co-ordinating a socialist economy means that information about production possibilities and demand for all types of goods has to be assembled and processed in a short period of plan preparation before resources are allocated and production takes place. This problem of *simultaneous* processing of vast amounts of information is at the heart of the argument that the existence of computers does not lessen the information problem. One advantage of market systems compared with central planning is not so much that they generate information at lower cost, but that they permit a relative autonomy of decisions, so that only a fraction of information about production possibilities and demand needs to be processed at any one time, in any one place.

Given this objective, Mandel's principal concern is to diminish bureaucracy and decentralize resource allocation. This would be done in two ways. Responsibility for determining the plan framework—the proportion of GNP to be devoted to each of twenty or thirty key sectors of production, the rate of growth, the volume of resources for 'non-essential' sectors, income differentials etc.—would rest with annual congresses of delegates from workers' and popular councils. Planners would still be required to draw up a more detailed plan based on this framework, utilizing input-output tables, indicating the resources available for each separate branch of production. But then the allocation of resources within each branch of production would be undertaken by self-managing bodies, such as congresses of workers' councils in that industry. The detailed product mix would flow from previous consultations between workers' councils and consumer conferences democratically elected by the mass of citizens. The bureaucracy of central Ministries for each sector of production would be largely eliminated.

The role of money and buying and selling would be reduced to a minimum; Mandel's goal is a withering away of money and buying and selling. This would be achieved by direct free distribution of goods required to satisfy basic needs: 'it will be quite possible to reduce the role of money in the economy as a whole, as non-priced goods and services become more numerous than goods and services bought.'⁴⁸ Thus, Mandel's

⁴⁶ This parallel between neo-classical economics and the economics of many orthodox Marxists has been noted by Geoff Hodgson, op cit, 1984, p. 158.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Lavoie, op cit.

⁴⁸ Mandel, op cit, p. 17.

alternative envisages not some different process of price determination, but the abolition of prices. Echoing Engels, he writes, 'The simplest—as well as the most democratic—way of adapting material resources to social wants is not to interpose the medium of money between the two, but to find out people's needs just by asking them what they are'⁴⁹

However, if prices really are abolished, it will be impossible to carry out the first stage of determining the plan framework. Shares of GNP are only possible as a starting point if there is a way of aggregating resources into a single measure. GNP is in fact calculated by using prices. Mandel does not make it clear whether he would allow 'shadow' prices to be used for this purpose; but his starting point certainly requires the use of prices of some sort

Provision is made for some choice by households: 'Various models—for example, different fashions in shoes—would be submitted to them, which the consumers could test and criticize and replace by others. Showrooms and publicity sheets would be the main instruments of that testing. The latter could play the role of a 'referendum'—a consumer, having the right to receive six pairs of footwear a year, would cross six samples in a sheet containing a hundred or two hundred options. The model mix would then be determined by the outcome of such a referendum, with post-production corrective mechanisms reflecting subsequent consumer criticisms.'⁵⁰

Clearly households in this society would have to do a great deal of forward planning, and it is not clear how households would cope with unexpected needs. Once their basic items have been ordered for the plan period, what happens if the size and composition of households change unexpectedly (for instance through births and deaths) or needs change because of sickness or change of work or change of location? Mandel also fails to make clear what the 'corrective mechanisms' would be and how they would operate. This is in line with the productionist bias of his vision. Mandel is more concerned with what he calls the 'despotism' of consumers over producers, than with the need to ensure that production generates efficiently the appropriate mix of quality goods and services at the right times. In his view, 'the average citizens of an advanced industrial country are not only and not even mainly . . . consumers. They are still first of all producers. They still spend an average of at least nine to ten hours a day, five days a week, working and travelling to and from work. If most people sleep eight hours a night, that leaves six hours for consumption, recreation, repose, sexual relations, social intercourse, all taken together.'⁵¹ It is obvious from this that Mandel's 'average citizen' is in fact an adult male—there is no mention of unpaid work in the household, no conception of consumption as requiring a household production process. Even for the adult male Mandel's argument is hollow: it is little consolation to a man who works in a car factory and whose car breaks down, through defects in its manufacture, to tell him that first and foremost he is a car producer not a car consumer. The trouble is that Mandel has the same abstracted view of consumption as something done by 'the consumer' as does the advertising executive. We are all users of products and services; most of

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21

us (except when infants or when sick) are also producers of them. The inevitable tension between our needs as users and our needs as producers cannot be resolved by asserting that we are 'first of all' producers. Moreover, it is not even true that we all think of ourselves as 'first of all' producers: many women see themselves as wives and mothers with responsibility for household management as well as workers, and many women are *not* in the paid workforce at all for significant periods of their adult lives. In the context of a very unequal distribution of household tasks between women and men, failures on the part of production units to supply appropriate quality-goods create special burdens for women. The adverse effects Mandel sees as stemming from 'consumer freedom', such as unemployment, speed-up, health hazards, 'the authoritarian discipline of production squads', do not arise from consumer choice *per se* but depend on the overall conditions in which choice is exercised.

It is unclear how the congress of workers' councils in each industry would decide the allocation of resources between enterprises. These congresses would in fact have to perform much the same task as Ministries have done in the USSR, and would face much the same problems. Mandel tends to gloss over these problems through his invocation of 'self-managing bodies'—for instance, his statement that a 'self-managing workforce would have no interest in hiding the facts'. But a particular self-managing unit *would* have an interest in hiding the facts from the congress of workers' councils if by so doing it could obtain a reduced workload or an increased input allocation. Self-management would mean that the entire workforce of an enterprise, and not just its managers, would stand to gain from disinformation. Self-management in itself would not overcome divisions between different self-managing groups. Mandel provides very little discussion of how self-managing bodies would be organized: 'self-management' functions rather as a *deus ex machina* to displace 'bureaucracy'.

An Economy of Repetition

The tasks of 'articulated self-management' are oversimplified because little allowance is made for the unexpected in Mandel's economy. The stress is on routinized, almost automatic processes: 'That is how most business is conducted today in capitalist—and "socialist"—countries: based on habit, custom, routine and the natural co-operation that grows from mutual knowledge and foreseeable results.'²² This assumption of an economy of repetition almost dissolves the co-ordination problem. It is a key assumption supporting Mandel's emphasis on the achievement of *ex ante* equilibrium and his belief that money and prices can and should be eliminated from a major role in the co-ordination process. The assumption of an economy which does not require adjustment processes is buttressed by an over-simplified view of needs. Mandel proceeds from the widely accepted view that there is a hierarchy of needs to the assumption that the mixture of goods which satisfies people's needs can be known to planners in advance and is independent of prices. But the fact that needs for food, drink, clothing and shelter are fundamental does not tell us what kinds of food, drink, clothing and shelter people want. Mandel thinks we can rely for this necessary detail on extrapolation of current patterns of

²² *Ibid.*, p. 23

sales of food, drink, clothing and shelter. But these patterns are determined by relative prices and income distribution (and by the power relations underlying these) as well as by needs. With changed relative prices and changed income distribution the pattern of consumption could change considerably. People do not decide how much to buy, even of bread, irrespective of the price of bread. Mandel considers that prices are not important in determining what people buy because he misunderstands the significance of 'fix-price' markets, and of the failure of consumers to respond to small changes in prices. These phenomena do not mean that resource allocation is not guided by prices; rather they mean that firms compare the costs of making frequent price changes with the benefits, and only change list prices when production costs move beyond a certain limit; the prices they do charge are constrained by consumer demand. Similarly, consumers compare the costs and the benefits of searching for lower-cost goods. Because of transaction costs in situations of limited information, and because buyers and sellers value continuity, prices in most markets are not fully flexible, and production is guided by quantity signals in the short run. But this does not mean that prices are redundant. For prices are an important determinant of profitability; and profitability guides investment decisions. Even in the short run, the phenomena that Mandel notes are indicators, not that prices do not matter, but that for most transactions, price norms are what matter. If an enterprise tried to increase profits by charging a lot more than the 'normal' price, it would soon lose customers. In keeping with his assumption of a static economy, Mandel implicitly assumes stability of relative price norms excepting in conditions of economic catastrophe. This ignores the effects of technical change: thirty years ago in Europe the relative price of TV sets was high and they were luxuries. Today, in relative terms, their price is much lower; and a TV set is widely regarded as a basic need, both in popular opinion and in the metrics of poverty used by social researchers.

Mandel asserts that 'it is much less costly and more reasonable to satisfy basic needs, not through the indirect road of allocation by money on the market, but through direct distribution—or redistribution—of the total resources available for them.'³³ But it is noticeable that his examples are all of extreme circumstances—Pinochet's Chile, famine in the Sahel, epidemics in Bangladesh. Of course, we would all agree that the most effective policy in such circumstances is direct distribution of food without payment. But are the measures required for disaster relief in conditions of highly unequal income distribution and private ownership of major resources really the same as those required to run a socialist economy in which major resources are socially owned and income distribution is relatively equal? Mandel fails to distinguish between the effects of capitalism and the effects of the price mechanism.

There is a case for the non-price distribution of certain goods—for instance, health and education—but this arises from certain characteristics of these particular goods. It is not the fact that they satisfy basic needs which is significant but particular kinds of interdependencies in their production and use. Mandel does not rest his case on such arguments: rather the elimination of prices and money is seen as desirable in itself.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 20

This leads to some strange suggestions—such that a social dividend should take the form of 'a specific extension of free vacation and travel for all (if that were the majority option).'²⁴ This is not much of a dividend for the minority who prefer to stay at home. Why not a social dividend in money form so that each could spend it according to their own preferences?

The crucial point about money and prices is that they enable us to consider alternatives, from deciding what percentage of national product to devote to health services to deciding which goods to acquire to satisfy our individual needs. Prices are not the only piece of information required to make choices between alternatives, but they are an indispensable piece of information for that.

Mandel's aversion to money and prices perhaps stems from the belief that money and prices are in some sense irredeemably capitalist forms. This is certainly the view of the Austrians, and is the basis for their belief in the impossibility of a well-functioning socialist economy. The view expressed by Lavoie that 'A price is a reflection of what is to Marx a contradiction of capitalism. It is both the organizing and rationalizing guide for production decisions and at the same time a reflection of the antagonistic social relations among buyers and sellers' would probably be shared by Mandel, and other anti-price Marxists. But the conclusion that I draw is not that prices and socialism are incompatible, but that the social relations between buyers and sellers must be changed so that they are *not* antagonistic; the price formation process must be a public process, not one controlled by enterprises; and information must be shared, with the nexus of trust, reciprocity and goodwill setting the limits within which the market operates, rather than being subordinate to the market.

II. Socializing the Market

It is much easier to criticize the ideas of others than to produce a viable alternative. The second part of this essay will on the whole be much more tentative than the first and will certainly be shorter. I am fairly confident about my starting point for this exploration of an alternative to both Nove's dual economy and Mandel's priceless economy, but many of the details represent my current stage of thinking rather than unshakable convictions. My ideas have undergone considerable modification since the first draft, and will doubtless pass through further changes.²⁵

The Production and Reproduction of Labour Power

Most discussion of socialist economic organization begins from forms of ownership of enterprises, but ownership is only important insofar as it has implications for the conditions of production and reproduction of labour power. In a capitalist economy labour power is separated from the means of subsistence, and the process of production and reproduction of labour power is a dependent variable, shaped by the accumulation process. The fundamental antagonism between buyer and seller is that between households as sellers of labour power and enterprises as buyers

²⁴ Ibid., p. 35

²⁵ My rethinking owes a lot to comments from Michael Barratt Brown

of labour power. This has to be changed, so that the process of production and reproduction of labour power is the independent variable to which the accumulation process accommodates.

To achieve this, households need to have access to a basic income without being forced to sell labour power to outside enterprises even when these are publicly owned. Their survival, at a basic but decent standard, should be independently guaranteed. They are then able to exercise genuine choice about selling their labour power to enterprises, rather than being impelled to sell by necessity. The precise way in which this may be achieved depends on the structure of the economy and the level of development: it will not be the same for a poor agrarian economy as for a richer industrialized economy. In all cases collective, public provision of health, education, water and sanitation services, free of charge, is likely to be appropriate. In a poor agrarian economy the access of households to land is likely to be a key factor; in a richer industrialized economy, collective public provision of a money income is more appropriate. Following the example of Nove and Mandel, I shall concentrate in more detailed examples on the case of a richer industrialized economy, but I shall try to formulate the basic ideas so as to be applicable to all types of economy.

In an industrial economy the foundation for household choice and freedom would be two-fold: the provision, free of charge of basic services, such as health and education, water and sanitation, and the provision to every citizen, in their own right, of a minimum money income to cover purchase of sufficient food, clothing, shelter and household goods for a very basic living standard (lentils not steak? mass-produced, not designer jeans? coconut matting, not pure wool carpets?)

The reason for free provision of services like health and education arises from particular characteristics of these services (interdependencies and externalities), not because they are 'basic'. A case could be made for free provision of other services, like urban transport, on similar grounds. But since practically all socialists are in agreement on these issues I shall not explore them in more detail. I shall, however, add to the list free provision of access to information networks: print, telephones, photocopiers, fax machines, computers etc. As will become apparent later, a necessary condition for socializing the market is equal and easy access to information. Pooling and sharing information is essential for the development of relations of goodwill, trust and reciprocity. This does not imply equipping every household with its own personal computer, modem, telephone and satellite dish; but it does imply ensuring that every household has access to such equipment in the same way as to schools and hospitals.

These freely provided services would need to be organized in such a way as to respond to household needs, and not simply the needs of their producers. This would require the establishment of forms of accountability to households, represented through users' organizations. Such forms of accountability exist in very embryonic form in some western European countries (for example, Community Health Councils in Britain) but they lack real power.

The other elements of basic income would ~~not~~ be provided free, for all the reasons advanced in discussing Mandel's proposals, but would be

provided as a sum of money. There is a growing literature on the place of universal grants in the construction of socialism³⁶ which I shall not comment on in any detail here. One obvious question is: if everyone gets a grant income which frees them from the necessity of selling their labour power to enterprises, what is there to ensure that the goods on which to spend the grant will be produced? One answer is that most people will want to buy more than the grant allows (steak and wine sometimes instead of lentils and water) and will therefore be happy to sell their labour power to acquire a higher income. Another answer is that people will use the money to buy their own means of production and set up household enterprises or join with other households to form co-operatives. A further answer is that people will be sufficiently public-spirited to realize that they must contribute to production if the grant is to have any real purchasing power: but this is open to the 'free-rider' objection that some will be public-spirited but others won't. Clearly a great deal depends on the context in which this grant is made: advocacy of universal grants as an essential feature of a socialist economy does not in my view entail support for replacing welfare state capitalism, including legislation to protect employees' rights, with universal-grant capitalism.³⁷ The universal grant has to be taken as part of a package of social arrangements, of which the abolition of capital is a vital precondition.

I have one suggestion to tackle the 'free-rider' problem which also has the advantage of contributing to the socialization of the unpaid work required for the production and reproduction of labour power. The suggestion is that alongside the right to a grant should be the duty, on the part of able-bodied adults, of undertaking some unpaid household work of caring and providing for those who are unable to take care of themselves. Persons already undertaking care of a young or old or sick or handicapped person would be exempt. Everyone else would have to undertake some kind of unpaid community service; for instance, attending upon a handicapped child while that child's carer had time off for some other activity—leisure or work. The socialization of household and other unpaid domestic duties has always been a goal of socialist feminists. But there has perhaps been too much of a tendency to see this in terms of taking such activities out of the household—nurseries, old people's homes, mental hospitals, communal dining rooms and laundries. These arrangements have a role to play, but they take too negative a view of the benefits of personal privacy, of a room of one's own, of community care. Rather than simply aiming to reduce the scope of life within the household, I would suggest aiming at social recognition of the contribution to the work of caring for others in the household. The arrangement I propose could also be used for transforming the sexual division of labour in such work. Men could be trained to acquire more of the skills of caring that women typically exercise. The fact that all citizens, including children, would get a grant in their own right, would also do much to weaken the dependence of women and children on men.

Another worry concerns the real purchasing power of the grant. The real standard of living which such a grant can buy depends on prices, and will

³⁶ See, for instance, articles by van der Veen and Parpa, Olin Wright, Nove, and Elster in *Theory and Society*, vol. 15 no. 5, 1986, and also D. Purdy, *The Theory of Wages*, London 1988.

³⁷ See the debate in *Theory and Society*, op. cit.

be eroded by inflation. The value of a money income as opposed to one in kind therefore depends very much on the process by which prices are set. There is thus a direct link between reliance on monetary grants—rather than what Mandel calls 'direct distribution' of basic goods—and the socialization of the market mechanism.

The majority of households will not only be buyers, they will also be sellers, at least at some stage in their life cycle. Some will choose to set up household enterprises or to join with other households in forming co-operatives owned by household members, and will be sellers of their products. These activities are likely to be small scale. The majority of households are likely to have members employed, at some stage or other in their life cycle, in larger-scale publicly owned enterprises, selling their labour power for a wage. Removal of the necessity to do this removes the basic cause of antagonism between buyers and sellers of labour power. But nevertheless, vital issues still remain about the organization of work within enterprises, the reallocation of labour as economic conditions change, and the determination of wages. Making labour power the independent variable means that labour power should not be treated simply as a resource on a par with machines and raw materials, even though in the account books of the enterprise both are represented by sums of money.

Worker-managed Public Enterprises

This implies that public enterprises should be worker-managed; that there should be a 'right to work' for those who are employees of public enterprises; and that basic wages should be determined through a 'socialized' labour market. Worker-management means that the total labour costs of an enterprise will generally not be treated simply as a cost to be minimized. This may lead to fears about 'inefficiency' and lack of innovation. But there is no reason why a worker-managed enterprise should not be concerned to reduce labour costs per unit of output through better organization of production, taking some productivity gains either in extra leisure or extra income. What a worker-managed enterprise will be better placed to resist are attempts to reduce labour costs per unit of output through increasing the intensity of labour, through cutting corners on health and safety, and through unemployment. These last three measures may appear to improve efficiency as indicated by profitability, but it is a one-sided efficiency which, while it may improve the satisfaction of the needs of households as buyers, worsens the satisfaction of the needs of households as sellers of labour power.

Workers in worker-managed public enterprises would not have the same degree of control as in co-operatives since there would be certain restrictions on the disposal and utilization of their assets. In centrally planned economies such restrictions have been enforced by a formidable central bureaucracy of Ministries of the various industrial sectors. Readers of NLR will not need persuading that these have to go. I propose that instead there be an office of Regulator of Public Enterprises whose job is not to set output targets and allocate inputs to public enterprises, but to enforce certain democratically agreed norms for the utilization of public assets; for instance, to prevent the employees of a public enterprise from

appropriating its assets for themselves or their associates. The Regulator of Public Enterprises would exercise property rights over the enterprises on behalf of the community, while enterprise employees would be limited to use rights. There would be no capital markets with take-over bids and bankruptcies. Reconstruction of enterprises would be the responsibility of the Regulator. In return for this limitation on their rights, employees of public enterprises would have a considerable part of their income paid as a fixed wage, rather than simply a share of the enterprise's surplus, but there could be fluctuating productivity bonuses linked to individual, team and enterprise performance. Enterprises would buy their materials and equipment and sell their output in 'socialized' markets, with the exception of those providing free services. They would have to operate within a framework of tough environmental, health and safety and consumer protection regulations enforced by well-resourced inspectorates. They would normally be expected to be self-financing, except those providing free services, which would be financed from taxation.

New entrants would be encouraged. Teams of workers could apply to the Regulator for permission to set up a new public enterprise, and to be allocated public funds (for which interest would be charged) to do this. In some industries it might be appropriate to have a system whereby teams of workers could submit tenders to the Regulator to run public facilities for a given period. There would be scope for a variety of forms of public control and decentralized initiative.⁵⁸

Obviously, situations would arise in which an enterprise was not able to pay its way and would need to be reconstructed. At this point the Regulator of Public Enterprises would be called in. No one would be made redundant. Instead, the Regulator would help formulate plans for the redeployment of employees to comparable jobs in other enterprises or to retraining, and then to new jobs. Employees would have well-defined rights in relation to this process, and would be able to take legal action to enforce them. The Regulator of Public Enterprises would provide transitional finance; and would also have rights to withhold finance in circumstances where workers were seeking feather-bedding rather than restructuring.

I am aware that I have said nothing about the internal procedures necessary to secure genuine worker-management. To the extent that there are large differences in the skills of different employees, and the scope of their jobs, it will be impossible for all to play an equal role. It is important to try to redress the disadvantage of those with lesser skills and jobs of restricted scope. An open information system, accessible to all employees, is essential. But ability to make sense of the information also matters, and openness alone will not guarantee that. So different groups of workers must be able to call on representatives of their own choice (which could be provided through trade unions) if they need help in formulating policy and in exercising their rights during restructuring. Neither will openness suffice if there is an unstable environment, requiring lots of discretionary powers in the hands of a few decision-makers. The possibilities for egalitarian forms of worker-management thus have implications for and depend on relationships between enterprises. It is not possible to have have a fully open

⁵⁸ For further discussion of innovation in forms of public sector organization, see R. Murray, *op. cit.*

information system within an enterprise and to keep secrets from other enterprises. A fully open information system *between* enterprises is, however, a key feature of socialized markets; and so are long-term links between buyers and sellers, which help to stabilize an enterprise's environment. Socialized markets, then, would be much more compatible with industrial democracy than are markets organized by enterprises.

Socialized Markets

Let me first set out some general characteristics of socialized markets. I will then consider in more detail how these might work for labour power, for producer goods (i.e. goods bought and sold between enterprises) and for consumer goods. A socialized market is one in which the market is made by public bodies, which are financed out of taxation of enterprises and households, rather than out of sales. It is also one in which the 'invisible handshakes', the relations of good will and reciprocity, which market economies have found it necessary to construct at least to some degree, are made into public information networks with open access rather than 'charmed circles' or 'gentlemen's clubs' which exclude 'outsiders'. Such networks would have secretariats financed by taxation, rather than by sale of their services.

The point of having public market-makers (let us call them Price and Wage Commissions) is to overcome the barriers to interchange of information which exist when markets are made privately. The Austrian school has always celebrated the extent to which markets generate information, but has not emphasized the way in which markets fragment information. Profit-seeking enterprises linked by the cash nexus have an incentive to conceal information about their productivity, costs of production and innovations. An advantage of the market is the way that it permits the dispersal of initiative; but a disadvantage is the way that it creates barriers to the sharing of information. A socialized market permits the dispersal of initiative, which is an essential feature of a society which liberates people, but creates new channels and incentives for individual initiatives to serve the common good.

This would require three kinds of activity to be undertaken by Price and Wage Commissions. First of all, Price and Wage Commissions would provide physical facilities for the interchange of information about terms of sales and purchases between enterprises, and between enterprises and households. The nature of these physical facilities must depend on the level of economic development. In a poor agrarian economy, the construction of marketplaces would be the first step. In an industrialized economy with access to micro-computers, an electronic marketplace would be possible. Electronic marketplaces are growing up, in fragmented fashion, in capitalist industrialized economies. A publicly provided electronic marketplace would have the enormous advantage of standardization—at the moment, the development of capitalist electronic marketplaces is hampered by incompatibility between different kinds of proprietary equipment. There are large economies of scale in information gathering and processing which an integrated, publicly provided, electronic marketplace could take advantage of to lower transaction costs. This would give enterprises and households a positive incentive to use the publicly

provided market: it would be cheaper to do so than to undertake their own, fragmented, search for information about terms of sales and purchases.

What kind of information should be gathered and pooled by Price and Wage Commissions? It would need to go beyond information about prices per unit. Part of the point of having a socialized market is to make the price formation process transparent, subject to public checks. In industrialized market economies most enterprises form their prices by adding a mark-up to unit costs, but the costs and the mark-up are not disclosed. The Price Commission would require information on unit costs so that the public could evaluate the relation between costs and prices. Would this mean extra costs for each enterprise in generating such information? Not if enterprises already generated such information for their own internal management purposes. Cost accounting is in fact a basic management tool of enterprises in capitalist economics. The difference would be not an obligation to generate new information, but an obligation to disclose information generally kept secret. So the second task would be to enforce information disclosure on the basis of standardized accounting conventions, as a precondition for entry into the publicly provided marketplace.

A third activity would be to guide the formation of prices and wages. It is of course impossible for Price and Wage Commissions themselves to police every deal and centrally to control all prices and wages. There is always the possibility of unofficial 'grey' or 'black' transactions outside central control. However, Price and Wage Commissions can generate price and wage norms, and can supply the information to enable buyers and sellers themselves to 'police' prices and wages in a decentralized way. Taxation and contract compliance laws can also be used to encourage adherence to the norms and to penalize departures. Prices and wages offered in any particular transaction can be compared with the norms. If both buyers and seller wished, for a particular transaction, to depart from the norm (to secure quicker delivery, or a variation in quality for instance) then they would be able to do so. But they would also have the possibility of objecting to departures from the norm and requesting an investigation by the relevant Commission. If many buyers and sellers are agreeing to depart from the norm, that may suggest that the norm needs to be revised. In the short run, however, industrialized, decentralized economies tend to experience price stickiness, with quantity adjustment (through lengthening or shortening order books, falling or rising inventories, and changes in product mix) playing the major role. In the longer run, price adjustment becomes important because of the influence of prices in investment appraisal. Because of price stickiness, the Commission sometimes may need to anticipate rather than follow the course of transactions, and to change price norms *before* prices in recorded transactions have changed appreciably. For this purpose it will require information from the networks about the movements in inventories and capacity utilization. Norms need to be formed interactively on the basis of information from buyers and sellers, not imposed centrally, irrespective of the requirements of buyers and sellers.³⁹ An advanced economy can

³⁹ The idea of interactive price formation is to be found in Lange's model of socialist economy, but Lange's price formation procedure is different from the one suggested here. See Lange, 'On the Economic Theory of Socialism', in A. Nove and D. Nutt, eds., op. cit.

link the electronic marketplace to the electronic payments system. A publicly provided electronic system for settlement of deals will record the terms of all transactions made, and this information can be processed to reveal departures from the norm. Again, the lower transactions costs of a publicly provided settlement system will give buyers and sellers an incentive to use it. Electronic, 'cashless' settlement systems are in the process of being developed in capitalist industrialized countries, but as with the electronic marketplace, are held back by lack of agreement on technical standards and high start-up costs.

Public market-makers need to be complemented by publicly organized networks of buyers and sellers sharing some common interest to promote the direct interchange of information about such things as the specifications of goods and production processes, and about investment plans. Such information networks⁶⁰ would differ from bureaucracies, with their hierarchies of power and rules nexus; and also from markets in which relationships are discontinuous and mediated by the cash nexus. They would differ from the informal networks of subcontracting between enterprises, because they would be provided with secretariats publicly funded from taxation to facilitate information exchange; and there would be open access to every social unit meeting some publicly specified set of criteria. The focus of information networks would not be prices and costs, but quantities and characteristics of goods and production processes. It would be open to anyone to construct voluntary networks; but voluntary efforts would be complemented by public networks whose co-ordinators would have powers to require disclosure of information. Buyer-seller networks would enable some of the interdependencies of decision-makers to be manifested before decisions are taken; so that individual units could make their decisions in a more public-spirited way, considering the implications of their decisions for others, as well as for themselves.

Network co-ordinators, like Price and Wage Commissions, would have three kinds of function: facilitation of information exchange; enforcement of information disclosure; and an interactive role, in this case in the design and specification of goods and production processes. There would need to be a variety of networks: for instance, an energy network, a transport network, a skills network, a consumer goods network. The information that buyer/seller networks would focus on would be current and planned inventories, capacities, designs and specifications. Again, this does not require enterprises to generate information that adds to their costs, but rather to share information which they in any case need for their own internal purposes. For instance, in industrialized capitalist economies, information on levels of inventories is becoming of prime importance with moves to 'just-in-time' systems of inventory control.⁶¹ Electronic technology has made it much easier and cheaper to monitor the level of inventories.

Buyer-seller networks would form the basis for a decentralized social planning process in which the implications of the investment plans of

⁶⁰ For another perspective on the potential of information networks in organizing a socialist economy, see Michael Barratt Brown, 'Information Networks', mimeo, 1988.

⁶¹ A Sayer, 'New Developments in Manufacturing: The Just-in-Time System', *Capital and Class* 30, Winter 1986.

different units for each other could be considered before such plans are finalized. The secretariats of such networks could interact with a national planning agency to generate an overall agreed strategy for the national economy. The desirability of decentralization of decisions on capacity utilization and innovation does not mean that no form of central planning for the whole economy is required. Indeed, there must be an overall strategy to identify which sectors are to expand and which to decline; how much is to be allocated for investment and how much for consumption; and which bottlenecks are to be widened, and which accepted as constraints. But the strategy would not be implemented by centralized allocation of material resources and output targets for each enterprise. Japanese and French strategic planning are perhaps the nearest to what I have in mind—but they lack many of the implementation procedures that would be open to a socialist economy; and the information networks on which they rely are 'old boy' networks, and trade associations, rather than open access networks. The Commissions and networks would operate in somewhat different ways in the case of labour power, producer goods and consumer goods, so these will now be considered separately.

The Labour Market

The Wage Commission would provide facilities for the interchange of information about job vacancies and job seekers. This in itself would be nothing new in the case of industrialized economies, but such facilities in capitalist economies have been woefully under-resourced, and have provided only very limited information about both vacancies and job seekers, leaving a large gap to be filled by profit-seeking, private employment agencies, and by both profit-seeking and non-profit-seeking research bodies. In particular, they have not provided comparative information about the general state of the labour market to enable enterprises and employees to *evaluate* the terms and conditions of job offers. Nor have they provided information about the basis on which relative wages are determined (whether formal job evaluation schemes or 'custom and practice').

To function effectively, the Wage Commission would require not just mandatory notification of vacancies but also information from enterprises on earnings and conditions of those in employment, and on the operation of job evaluation and grading schemes. This is the kind of information that personnel departments would in any case collect: what is additionally required is disclosure of such data, and further processing by the Wage Commission. Micro-processors with spreadsheets and graphics capacities would take very little time to summarize and present the data in a way that made sense to individual job seekers or recruiters. The Wage Commission, if properly resourced, would not add a costly layer of bureaucracy. Instead, it would replace a whole host of agents which, in capitalist economies, act to generate but also to fragment and conceal information.

The Wage Commission could assist in the enforcement of minimum standards for terms and conditions of work by refusing entry into the socialized market to job offers falling below these standards. In the same way it could assist in the enforcement of job evaluation procedures meeting certain minimum requirements (such as equal pay for work of equal value and valuation which does not always give greater weight to muscle power

compared with manual dexterity). Such minimum standards would certainly need to be incorporated in legislation; but going beyond this, the Wage Commission could disseminate information about 'best practice' procedures, and promote improvements.

Besides collecting, processing and disseminating information, the Wage Commission would produce basic 'norms', both for relative basic wages, and for across-the-board increases in basic wages. This would be a key contribution both to securing a socially just income distribution and to controlling inflation. It is absolutely essential that *all* wages, from those of the (democratically elected) President to those of the least skilled manual worker, be included. (I am assuming that there is no property income apart from interest on personal savings.) Since everyone would be guaranteed a basic minimum income, it is likely that the relative wage of unskilled boring and unpleasant work would command a higher wage than is common at the moment, for otherwise no one would do it.

The establishment of relative wage norms would proceed through democratically controlled job evaluation exercises, and could be revised annually to take account of changing economic and social structures, as reflected in statistics on job vacancies and job seekers. The establishment of an across-the-board norm for wage increases would depend on macro-economic decisions about the levels of aggregate investment and consumption, and on underlying productivity growth. Enforcement would be through a variety of channels: taxation; contract compliance; adverse publicity for violations; and the creation of an atmosphere of trust based on an open society, including an open process of price formation, with norms set by the Price Commission. The aim would be to make the process of wage formation as transparent as possible.

Under such a system the central focus of trade unions would undoubtedly shift from collective bargaining with enterprise management about the level of basic wages. But there would certainly still be an important role for trade unions: in enabling members to secure their rights; in bargaining about the organization of production and the disposal of enterprise surpluses (after taxation); in advising on national job evaluation standards and comparability exercises. Trade unions are an expression of the division of labour; and as the division of labour changes, so would their role. But for as long as there are substantial differences in the scope of jobs, with some carrying planning responsibility ('mental labour') while others carry only implementation responsibility ('manual labour'), then trade unions are essential for defending the interests of the latter. This should include the right to strike, and to genuine autonomy of organization.

There would be no involuntary unemployment because the Regulator of Public Enterprises would act as a kind of 'holding company' for people whose previous jobs had been scrapped; paying them their basic wages, and providing them with an organizational structure and training, until they could be relocated to new jobs. Networks between users and providers of labour power (including households and training and educational institutions) could play an important role in reducing the costs of such operations; and would also provide the basis of labour power planning by collecting quantitative information on occupational structure

and forecasts of future needs. A variety of networks could be organized around clusters of skills, qualifications and occupations. Both users and providers of labour power have an interest in developing skills: creativity, self-discipline, knowledge of techniques etc. Skill networks would provide arenas for developing mutually beneficial ways of training and utilizing labour power that avoid the creation of dead-end jobs, and one-sided, limited, non-transferable skills. They would not end the possibility of tension between an individual's desire for job satisfaction and an enterprise's goal of being self-financing. But they would provide arenas in which different agents would have an opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of others, and look at training, education and labour process design from a variety of viewpoints. Besides collecting and pooling information, an important task of network secretariats would be to provide network participants with opportunities to share the experience of others, from role-playing exercises, to interchange of personnel between enterprise and educational and training institutions, to acting as advisers for each other's activities.

Without measures to socialize the labour market, market allocation is almost bound to involve unemployment. In countries where market socialism has been taken furthest, such as Hungary and Yugoslavia, unemployment is growing, while job-finding and retraining facilities are hopelessly inadequate. But centralized, bureaucratic resource allocation through Ministries stifles productivity growth and innovation. The sort of measures I have proposed stand some chance, I think, of avoiding these two undesirable extremes.

The Producer Goods Market

The buying and selling of producer goods takes place between enterprises. There is no reason why publicly owned enterprises should not exercise decentralized initiative in buying and selling producer goods within certain guidelines laid down by the Regulator of Public Sector Enterprises to regulate their expansion and contraction and to prevent misappropriation of assets. Little more need be said about the activities of the Price Commission for producer goods in providing facilities for the interchange of information about terms of sales and purchases. The information disclosure role does warrant particular emphasis because cartellization and price rings are particularly prevalent in some producer goods industries in capitalist countries. Can we have any confidence that enterprises will use agreed accounting standards and will disclose unit costs as required? Won't they keep two sets of books, one for the Price Commission and one for themselves? The question of quality of information is an important consideration. There are well-known problems in systems with centralized resource allocation because enterprises do not supply central planners with truthful information about resource requirements per unit of output. In such systems there is an in-built incentive for enterprises to supply 'disinformation' because the central planners both set targets for enterprises, and allocate enterprise inputs required to meet those targets. Naturally, enterprises have been inclined to inflate their estimates of inputs required per unit of output to make it easier to reach output targets. Are there any incentives to under- or over-report unit costs to the Price Commission? To answer this we need to consider the nature of the price formation process.

It is well established that most enterprises in capitalist industrialized economies set prices as a mark-up on their unit costs, the size of the mark-up being constrained by the behaviour of competitors, and of customers. The Price Commission would form price norms in a similar way, except that the basis would be average unit costs, and the mark-up would be determined by the investment needs of the economy. The higher the overall rate of investment required by the strategy formulated through the planning process, the higher would be the mark-up. The mark-up could vary across industries to generate a higher surplus in industries in which the strategy requires expansion, and a lower surplus in industries in which the strategy requires contraction. This is the price formation procedure adopted by Kalecki,⁶² and differs from the trial-and-error procedure advocated by Lange in that it does not aim to generate market-clearing price norms, but rather to generate price norms that will encourage restructuring in the right direction through differential returns to different activities. It allows for the pricing of non-standardized, one-off goods, which are characteristic of some sections of producer goods industries. Price norms could be reviewed annually, but there is no need for them all to be reviewed simultaneously. Between annual review price norms could remain stable. The review would then decide to what extent cost and demand changes (as revealed in inventory changes) required changes in prices. The extent to which cost increases would be reflected in higher price norms would depend upon the extent to which levels of production in a particular sector needed to be increased, decreased or maintained stable. The price formation process would be transparent in the sense that the public would know the basis on which price norms were determined, and could check actual prices against the norms. It would provide an incentive for efficiency since norms would be related to average costs and mark-ups: a firm with lower than average costs would be able to make a larger surplus, and would have funds for expansion or higher bonuses for its workers. It would diminish the power of large enterprises to bolster their own profit by squeezing the profit-margins of their small sub-contractors. It would also counteract a tendency for enterprises to try to maintain profit margins even when capacity is not fully utilized, and to be reluctant to cut prices to increase capacity utilization; tendencies which characterize enterprises in capitalist economies and underpin the possibility of deficiencies in aggregate demand.⁶³

Such a procedure for forming price norms (coupled with a variety of sticks and carrots to encourage adherence to these norms) would help to implement the macro-economic strategy and diminish the possibility of the economy being caught in a stagflation trap. The avoidance of macro-economic problems and the facilitation of restructuring are the fundamental reasons for not leaving the price formation process entirely in the hands of enterprises. Decisions about levels and mixes of output, and about input mixes, would be left to enterprises (informed by the information networks), but the price formation procedure would be socialized. The feasibility of this procedure clearly depends on the quality of the information transmitted to the Price Commission. One can imagine situations where a small group of enterprises dominates an industry, and

⁶² M. Kalecki, *Selected Essays on Economic Planning*, Oxford 1986.

⁶³ This tendency can be theorized in various ways—Okun's 'invisible handshakes' and Kalecki's 'degree of monopoly' being two of the possibilities.

might consider colluding to transmit inflated cost information to the Price Commission. This would enable them to earn higher surpluses than the Price Commission would envisage.

There are a variety of measures which could be used to guard against the possibility of disinformation: a well-resourced inspectorate with powers to seize company records; a requirement that computerized management information systems should be 'open access'; a variety of measures to make it just too complex and costly for an enterprise to keep two sets of books (or computer tapes, floppy discs etc); and measures to facilitate new entrants and to diminish collusion possibilities (such as competitive tendering for operational contracts of limited duration). The Price Commission would need considerable resources—but these could be provided by redeployment of resources which in capitalist economies are absorbed by financial institutions in the capital market. The skills of an investment analyst working for a merchant bank would be just the sort of thing the Price Commission would need.

Networks between buyers and sellers of producer goods would have two particularly important functions: the minimizing of fluctuations in capacity utilization because of bunching of investments, which can be quite pronounced for many producer goods industries; and the diffusion of technical innovations. In capitalist economies there is considerable collaboration between buyers and sellers on the design and specification of producer goods and the indication of future investment needs. In response to new electronics-based automation technologies, inter-enterprise networks in capitalist economies appear to be extending their scope, involving not just long-term contracts for particular products but also integration of design and planning. Some researchers describe this as *systemofacture*, in which the production unit consists of a cluster of integrated, yet separate, enterprises which enjoy detailed co-ordination of product development and production schedules, utilizing micro-electronic information processing technology.⁶⁴ However, this is limited by the rights of privately owned enterprises to keep information secret if it gives them a competitive advantage. In the scenario of socialist economy developed here, this right would not exist. Public enterprises would have to share information about their technological innovations and production plans as a condition for utilizing publicly owned assets. Co-operatives and household enterprises would have to share information as a condition for admittance to the publicly provided markets and networks. To provide some material incentive for innovation a fee could be paid for deposit of specifications in a Technology Bank to which all network members would have access and enterprises could apply for grants to undertake R&D. But competition through concealment would be as far as possible minimized. (In this respect, the socialist economy I envisage would come a lot closer to the neo-classical models of competition, which assume all technologies are known by everyone, than any capitalist or market-socialist economy can.)

The Consumer Goods Market

Many of the procedures discussed above would also apply to the case of

⁶⁴ R. Kaplinsky, 'Electronics-based Automation Technologies and the Onset of Systemofacture', *World Development*, vol 13 no 3, 1985

consumer goods. Here I want to focus on what is different: the fact that households are the buyers in this market. On the one hand, households do not have the breadth of resources or specialized knowledge that enterprises have. On the other hand, if households pursue a narrow and piecemeal policy of considering each item of purchase separately to get the best bargain, ignoring interdependencies in its conditions of production and use, their actions will frequently be self-defeating.⁶⁵ A socialized market would put more knowledge in the hands of households and make them more aware of interdependencies between their activities as producers and their activities as consumers.

The information provided by the Price Commission would enable households to see just how the price of a good in the shops is formed: how much goes to each activity contributing to the total price; how mark-up and costs split at each point in the chain of production; how much tax or subsidy is incorporated in the price. When a price rises, it would be possible to show households the reason for the rise—which costs had increased, which mark-ups had been expanded in order to provide incentives for the expansion of production. The reaction of households to price rises is a critical factor in the operation of both capitalist and actually existing socialist economies. In neither type of economy have households been provided with enough information to evaluate prices, to decide if rises are justified, or to distinguish between changes in relative prices, necessary for readjustment of the economy, and rises in the general level of prices. Indeed, downward price stickiness has meant that adjustments in relative prices could only be achieved as part of a rise in the general level of prices. No price system can produce a rational system of resource allocation if prices do not cover current costs and future investment needs. But since price formation is opaque, it is not surprising if households distrust the authorities (be they capitalist enterprises or socialist planners) when they announce that price rises are necessary. What is required is not detailed information about *all* goods and services; it could be provided for those that are staple items, accounting for a large proportion of household expenditure.

Sub-contracting networks already exist in capitalist economies between large retailers and their suppliers, similar to those existing in the case of producer goods. Indeed retailers like Marks and Spencer, the Body Shop and Benetton are very good examples of systemofacture. But households are not integrated into such networks: all they have is that much more nebulous 'invisible hand shake' or 'objective social co-operation', which amounts to little more than repeat purchases from the same source secured by 'sticky' prices. To redress the relatively weak position of households as consumers, I propose that a Consumer Union should be formed to act as a network co-ordinator between households and enterprises producing, wholesaling and retailing consumer goods and services. It would provide information about the *quality* of goods and services in the same way that Consumer Associations do in some industrialized capitalist economies; but it would go beyond that. It would also provide information about the conditions under which goods and services are produced, and about their environmental implications. Households

⁶⁵ For many examples which illustrate this point see Hirsch, *op. cit.*

which wanted to avoid purchasing goods made under certain conditions and to favour goods made under other conditions would have the information to do so. Goods produced under 'best practice' conditions (from the point of view of ecology, or equal opportunities, or humane working conditions) could be highlighted. The Consumer Union would educate households to take a wider view about the implications of their purchases than simply looking for the cheapest way to fulfil their immediately perceived needs. It would help households to appreciate that what seems in the short run, and from the individual point of view, the 'best buy' may turn out to have all kinds of detrimental spin-off in the long run. The Consumer Union would thus address many of the concerns of 'eco-socialists'.

The activities of the Consumer Union would go beyond this educative role, for they would also offer services to make shopping easier and to enable households to take some initiative in the design and specification of goods. The Union would have branches in every locality, keeping up-to-date information about availability of goods and services, which could be relayed to households via TV sets equipped with systems like Prestel. The use of point-of-sales electronic technology makes gathering data about the level of stocks speedy and simple. If a household wants to know where in the locality it can purchase a pair of dark-blue corduroy trousers for a nine-year-old boy, the Consumer Union can supply this information, avoiding fruitless quests to several stores. The Consumer Union would also enable households to initiate the commissioning of products rather than simply respond to initiatives of suppliers. They would include in their staff not just those with expertise on consumer's rights and consumer protection, but also designers and engineers able to identify unsatisfied needs and to work with suppliers to ensure that they are met. Suppliers, of course, try to identify unmet sales opportunities, but that is not quite the same thing, for they have a built-in incentive to mould the expression of needs in ways that create maximum income for themselves. It is difficult for households to determine the best way of meeting their needs if they are unaware of the range of technical possibilities: the specification of needs is often difficult in the abstract, and is much easier when confronted with a range of definite possibilities. Of course, there is a potential conflict between economies of scale and customizing products to meet specific needs. But this conflict is being diminished by the development of flexible specialization, the use of equipment which has the capacity to switch from producing batches of one type of output to batches of another type of output without down-time for retooling.

All enterprises wishing to produce or sell goods and services to households would need to register with the Consumer Union, and to disclose information about their products and methods of production, and about inventory levels—information which they in any case need for their own purposes. A great deal of the resources deployed in capitalist economies on market research and advertising could be redeployed to the Consumer Union, which would enjoy economies of scale and reduced transaction costs. It is essential that the Consumer Union should be financed from taxation to enable its advice to be independent and to prevent it from having to utilize 'hard-sell' techniques on its own behalf.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ It is ironic that in Britain the Consumers Association, which is financed out of subscriptions, now resorts to such techniques to acquire new subscribers.

There would be competition in this economy, but it would be bounded competition, and the bounds would go beyond anything existing in any capitalist economy. There would naturally be health and safety and environmental protection legislation, and legislation to protect the rights of individual employees or consumers. But in addition, there would be bounds placed by the independent access of households to the means of life, and by the absence of private property in knowledge. This latter absence would not stifle innovation since fees would be paid by the Technology Bank. In any case, extra profits are not the only spur to innovation: more leisure time, less arduous work, social esteem, the sheer pleasure of producing new knowledge and solving problems are all powerful incentives. Moreover, the Regulator of Public Enterprises would want to know about the innovation record of teams of workers in determining who should get contracts to run new enterprises, and how restructuring should take place.

Co-ordination and Conscious Control

Let me now summarize the way in which I envisage socialist economic co-ordination taking place. First, the objective of co-ordination would not be an *ex-ante* equilibrium in which supply and demand are equated before production takes place. That is an impossible goal. The problem with private market co-ordination is not its failure to achieve this goal, but its failure to achieve adjustment in the right direction. There are a variety of reasons why self-financing enterprises will *not* necessarily reduce prices for goods in excess supply and increase them for goods in excess demand. Kalecki rooted price stickiness in oligopolistic collusion; more recently, Keynesian and institutionalist economists have begun to explore other possible causes, linked to the information and transaction costs of a market economy of self-financing enterprises. The micro-level adjustment failure of the market mechanism underlies the macro-level problems of unemployment and inflation which are of major concern to socialists. Micro- and macro-level problems cannot be treated separately. So the objective is a co-ordination process that helps to avoid unemployment and inflation, while at the same time being conducive to increases in productivity and the meeting of people's needs.

Overall economic planning has a vital role to play in setting the parameters in which individual enterprises operate, and in anticipating major interdependencies. But it would take the form of a guiding strategy, a vision of the future, not a procedure for detailed allocation of material inputs. The planners in the Central Office of Economic Planning would draw upon the information networks of buyers and sellers of key resources in formulating alternative scenarios, of which one could be chosen by some democratic political process. Fiscal and monetary policy would play an important role in plan implementation; but so also would relations of reciprocity, good will and persuasion, as happens in Japanese economic co-ordination.

Enterprises would *not* be subject to binding administrative directions from ministries, though they would—if not co-operatives or self-employed—be publicly owned and subject to the Regulator of Public Enterprises. Employees of public sector enterprises would have use rights but not

property rights, and such enterprises would be self-financing. The redeployment of labour power between enterprises would be organized by the Regulator. Enterprises would be free to choose their suppliers and customers, but their inter-relations with each other, and with households, would be mediated by Price and Wage Commissions and network co-ordinators, including a Consumer Union. Enterprises would make contact, and keep in contact, with customers and suppliers through public channels, financed from taxation; and these channels would be open information channels. Price and wage formation would be transparent; the design of products and production processes would be transparent. The barriers to information transfer constituted by privately operated markets would be dissolved.

Such a system of co-ordination does not require simultaneous processing of large amounts of information, of the kind necessary for effective central planning (which, even with the latest computer technology, is argued to be unfeasible). Rather it requires the gathering and processing, at discrete intervals, in separate bundles, of information already generated by enterprises for their own use, such as unit costs and level of inventories, and process and product specifications. The barrier to this is not technical: current levels of micro-processor technology can certainly handle this kind of information processing very rapidly. Poor economies can use electro-mechanical techniques (or even abacuses) and be more selective in the range and the depth of socialization of markets. The public information system would not be additional to, but would replace the myriad fragmented operations of private enterprises, and would enjoy considerable economies of scale. The barrier is not technical: it is social and political. Those with positions of power to preserve will resist information disclosure. There is no infallible recipe for enforcing disclosure, but in an economy in which the possibility of taking initiatives is widely dispersed, and in which there is no capital market for buying and selling enterprises, there is more likely to be recognition of the mutual benefits of information sharing.

Open access to information is the key to conscious control of the economy. There has been a tendency among Marxists (beginning with Marx) to interpret conscious control in terms of gathering all relevant information at one decision-making point and of taking decisions with full knowledge of all inter-connections and ramifications. That is an impossible, and an undesirable, goal. Conscious control is better interpreted as open access to all available information concerning the product and its price, so that any decision-maker has access to the same information as any other.

This has implications for the question of how we get from where we are now to the kind of socialist economy I envisage. In capitalist economies the important thing seems to be to attack capital's prerogatives over information, and to begin to develop networks which prefigure those a socialist economy would need.⁶⁷ A whole host of issues ranging from market regulation, restrictive practices and cartels, environmental issues,

⁶⁷ An example of a 'prefigurative' network is Twin Trading, which under the leadership of Michael Barrett Brown, links producers and users of goods and services in the UK and a variety of Third World countries

consumer protection, to industrial democracy, and national industrial strategies, to open government, could be woven into a coherent campaign around open access to information. Within this, priorities need to be chosen from the point of view of those with least access to and control over information, the people with least education and skills, who are generally also the poorest. This would have the advantage of capturing the moral high ground and of appealing to a wide range of non-socialists as well as to socialists, while going to the heart of capital's ability to exploit labour.

In actually existing socialist economies the important thing seems to be to attack both the bureaucracy's prerogatives over information *and* enterprise management's prerogative over information. Glasnost is certainly a step in the right direction: but it needs to go much further. Market socialism by itself reinforces and extends the power of enterprise management, at the expense of ordinary workers. Measures to create markets must be complemented by measures to socialize markets.

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Commercial Capital and British Development: A Reply to Michael Barratt Brown

Despite their overtly historical nature, Anderson and Nairn's essays on British development were profoundly theoretical. The identification of British 'peculiarity' or 'exceptionalism' involved a challenge not only to Marx and Engels's commentaries on the times in which they lived, but also to the general Marxist theory of capitalist development.¹ However, this aspect did not figure explicitly in the early debates: for example, Thompson attempted to settle the issue by simply denying the historical validity of Anderson's revisions. It was not until a later sequel that Nairn tried to reconcile historical heterodoxy with traditional Marxist theory. 'A generally Marxist model of Britain is sufficient', he wrote, but it had to be 'historical and specific'. He saw the major deficiency of past Marxist analyses of Britain as the 'overabstraction' involved in explaining the functioning of state and society wholly in terms of the internal industrial economy and its relations of production.² But this was theoretical legerdemain: at what point, I asked in *Capitalism Divided?*, does the historically specific model

part company with the concept of the capitalist mode of production and all that this entails in Marx's scheme. Anderson's 'Figures of Descent' contains a different claim for the legitimization of heterodoxy: he believes he can detect a clear shift in Marx and Engels's understanding of bourgeois power in nineteenth-century Britain. It is suggested that they moved from believing the industrial bourgeoisie to be 'in command of Victorian state and society' to a view that this class was 'subordinate in its actions and aspirations' to the aristocracy.³ This may be a reasonable interpretation of the doubts expressed by Marx and Engels in their occasional essays as the century progressed, but it is not the substance of the *Preface to a Critique of Political Economy* or of *Capital*.⁴ And it is these works which formed the basis for Marxist economics, sociology and history. In short, it is extremely difficult to reconcile the subordination of the industrial bourgeoisie during the nineteenth century and beyond with the tenets of Marx's 'theory of history'. This remains one of the main points of difference between myself and Anderson; details apart, I concur with the substance of his historical account.⁵

Michael Barratt Brown's polemic is ostensibly directed at 'Figures of Descent', but most of his ire is reserved for *Capitalism Divided?*. 'Away With All The Great Arches' belongs firmly to the older empirical mode of criticism to which I referred earlier. It is primarily an uncompromising reassertion of Marxist (and liberal) orthodoxy: that is, of the absolute centrality of the 'industrial revolution' and industrial capitalism for an accurate understanding of Britain's general development.⁶ *Capitalism Divided?* is vigorously rejected because of alleged 'factual errors' and 'rather large conceptual confusions'; it is, in Barratt Brown's view, very bad history and consequently cannot threaten traditional Marxism. However, theory is not entirely absent; as we shall see, Barratt Brown's history is informed—albeit implicitly—by an eclectic combination of two opposing strands of orthodox Marxism. Both 'functionalism' and 'instrumentalism' are woven into his narrative.

There appear to be five main elements in Barratt Brown's critique. In the first place, most critical emphasis is placed on my designation of the City as primarily a centre of commercial capital. This is seen to be 'conceptually confused' and 'ambiguous'. Second, he questions my view of Britain's productive economy and, especially, the analysis of finance-industry relations presented in *Capitalism Divided?*. Third, the identification of the City-Bank of England-Treasury relationship as the 'core institutional nexus' of British society and the means by which the City's hegemonic position has been reproduced is alleged to be 'fatally flawed'. Fourth, my discussion of the links between the City and Empire is

¹ See the discussion of Anderson and Naum's essays in *Capitalism Divided? The City and Industry in British Social Development*, London 1984, pp. 15–26, 32–39.

² Tom Naum, 'The Decline of the British State', *New Left Review* 101/2, February–April 1977.

³ Perry Anderson, 'Figures of Descent', *New Left Review* 161, January–February 1987.

⁴ An equally plausible alternative case can be made, see *Capitalism Divided?*, Ch. 1.

⁵ David Nicholls ('Fractions of Capital: the Aristocracy, the City and Industry in the Development of British Capitalism', *Social History* 13/1, January 1988) observes that Anderson does 'not acknowledge the implication of Ingham's thesis for Marxist theory'. However, he goes too far in suggesting that I see my work as a 'refutation of Marxism' (p. 76).

⁶ Michael Barratt Brown, 'Away with all the Great Arches: Anderson's History of British Capitalism', *New Left Review* 167, January–February 1988.

brusquely dismissed as 'quite simply nonsense'. Finally, these serious deficiencies are ascribed to my method: the analytical or sociological history of *Capitalism Divided?* is described as a 'great arch' from whose lofty vantage-point I (and Anderson) have failed to observe the major discontinuities which Barratt Brown detects in Britain's development. Unfortunately, there are also many instances of misunderstanding and what I can only interpret as misrepresentation in his polemic: much of 'Away With All The Great Arches' is the dismissal of a caricature.

The City and Commercial Capital

It is arguable that I devoted too much attention to the careful elaboration of conceptual distinctions between the economic practices of commercial, banking and productive capital—in fact, almost three chapters. Moreover, the discussion was based on Marx's own analysis of the forms and circuits of capital. None of this is referred to by Barratt Brown and this probably explains why he can claim that I present a 'peculiarly ambiguous definition of commercial activity which includes banking and insurance and merchanting, but, apparently, also brewing and shipping and sometimes even all forms of overseas investment.'⁷ The first and least important objection is to Barratt Brown's curious misrepresentation. Nowhere in the book did I include brewing under the rubric of commercial capital, and in the reference he cites for the quotation above there is no mention of either shipping or overseas investment. In fact, my whole enterprise was to move away from the potentially confusing common-sensical definitions of economic activity which Barratt Brown falsely attributes to me. The passage in the Introduction to *Capitalism Divided?* which he cites as the source of his interpretation is as follows: 'Fundamentally, London's role in the world system may be seen as the specialization in and near monopolization of the commercial activities which are based on the existence of international exchanges. These activities include the financing of trade, insurance of commodities and transport, foreign exchange dealing, etc. The City has not simply dealt with Britain's exchanges with other states, but has performed a wide range of functions for the world system as a whole. The most important aspect of this role has been the management of the domestic currency as world money—that is, as an internationally acceptable means of payment and exchange. More recently, the largest single share of the transactions in de facto universal money such as Eurodollars has been undertaken in London.'⁸

I also argued that the 'City is not—as most Marxists have maintained—a special type of "finance capital" which is externally rather than domestically oriented. Clearly, the City is involved with financial relationships, in the sense that money capital is provided for different purposes. But the City's main role is in the intermediation of these relationships—that is to say, considered as economic practices these activities are commercial. . . . The roles of the City houses as middlemen or brokers in the provision of finance overseas (and domestically for that matter) are best viewed as comprising commercial practices which form part of complex financial relationships. For example, the City's profits have not been primarily in

⁷ Barratt Brown, p. 29

⁸ *Capitalism Divided?*, p. 5

the form of interest, but a deduction from this in the form of brokerage fees or commission—that is, commercial profit from the trading in various forms of investment capital.⁹

Eventually, Barratt Brown concedes that my analysis has some contemporary significance: '... the City today is ... not the engine of anything except of the revolving wheels of a casino ... Today we can indeed begin to understand what Ingham meant by commercial as opposed to productive activity.'¹⁰ But he sees this as a very recent departure; in the nineteenth century, he argues, the City's main role was in the provision of investment capital both at home and overseas—especially to the Empire.¹¹ Barratt Brown utterly rejects my stress on the enduring clearing-house role of the City in the world system. However, the contrast is surely overdrawn: today as in the nineteenth century, the funds which pass through London finance all kinds of activity throughout the world—including production and speculation. But the fundamental point, which Barratt Brown simply fails to grasp, is that the City itself has never realized the major part of its own profits from investment in production, but, rather, from the financial and commercial intermediation which enabled this to take place.

The Interpretation of Imlah

The main thrust of Barratt Brown's polemic hinges on my alleged misuse of Imlah's statistical work on Britain's balance of payments in the nineteenth century.¹² In a formal sense the dispute's resolution rests on Barratt Brown's concession that my 'thesis can be justified only by including shipping revenues with financial services.'¹³ The reasons given for the exclusion of shipping display Barratt Brown's own conceptual confusion and, it must be said, either his neglect or his misunderstanding of the theoretical treatment of commerce in *Capitalism Divided?*. He continues: 'Shipping apparently appears under commerce because it is concerned with foreign trade; but it is not a financial service and the direct exploitation of labour by capital could hardly be more apparent than in this industry.'¹⁴

First, it should be noted that I do not include shipping under the rubric of 'financial services'; it is, rather, a branch of commercial capital. From a commonsense standpoint, of course, shipping (like warehousing, for example) involves the 'exploitation' of labour; however, profits from this activity are not the direct result of the production of surplus value. In Marx's scheme, the profits of the carrying trade in the circulation of surplus value (like those of the merchant or warehouse owner) represent a deduction from the value created by workers in production and extraction. The latter are exploited in the technical sense used by Marx who insisted that: 'However much we twist and turn, the final conclusion remains the same ... Circulation or the exchange of commodities creates no value.'¹⁵ Barratt Brown's objection merely serves to obscure one of

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ Barratt Brown, p. 47

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 30, 31, 33, 36, 37

¹² Albert H. Imlah, *Economic Elements in the Past Britannica*, New York 1958

¹³ Barratt Brown, p. 29

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 30

¹⁵ *Capital*, I, Harmondsworth 1976, p. 331

TABLE 1 GREAT BRITAIN FOREIGN EARNINGS OF BRANCHES OF CAPITAL, 1815-1913 (£m)							
	PRODUCTION Exports of UK products	Re-exports	COMMERCE Shipping credits	Services	TOTAL COMMERCE	BANKING/ FINANCE Interest & dividends	TOTAL FINANCE & COMMERCE
1815-20	40	11	10	9	30	2	32
21-25	37	8	9	7	24	4	28
26-30	36	7	8	7	22	5	27
31-35	40	8	9	8	25	5	30
36-40	50	9	11	11	31	8	39
41-45	52	9	12	11	32	7	39
46-50	61	11	14	13	38	9	47
51-55	84	16	19	18	53	12	65
56-60	124	25	26	24	75	16	91
61-65	142	46	34	33	113	22	135
66-70	181	47	44	40	131	31	162
71-75	238	58	51	49	158	50	208
76-80	201	57	54	47	158	56	214
81-85	247	63	60	47	170	65	235
86-90	239	62	57	46	165	84	249
91-95	223	61	57	45	163	94	257
96-1900	254	61	62	47	170	100	270
1901-05	204	70	71	54	195	113	308
06-11	396	90	89	67	246	151	397
12-13	481	105	100	80	285	188	473
Growth							
1815-1890	4.8	6.8	5.2	4.2	5.3	10.5	6.4
1891-1913	2.1	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.8

Marx's most enduring achievements: the 'materialist method' which stresses the fundamental importance of deciphering the precise social-structural conditions by which value is created and different types of profit are realized.

Within the limitations imposed by the official classification of different branches of economic activity, I would suggest that the retabulation of Imlah's data in Table 1 represents the nearest approximation of the relative contributions of productive, commercial and banking/finance capital to Britain's balance of payments during the time in question.¹⁶

When tabulated in this way, Imlah's data starkly show the fundamental weakness of Britain's productive economy. From 1815 to 1913, the combined receipts from commerce and banking/finance are virtually the same as those from the export of British products. Moreover, commercial capitalism grew as quickly as manufacture for exports after 1836; that is, in the period which saw the most rapid expansion of industrialization. With regard to shipping credits, there can be few clearer expressions of Medick's description of Britain as the *Makler* (middleman/broker) economy than in her disproportionate share of the world's carrying trade.¹⁷ Throughout the nineteenth century, there was—as Anderson puts it—'a two-track development of capital'. Data for other countries comparable to those constructed by Imlah are not available; but a brief glance at the USA's balance-of-payments figures for the period 1840–1950 (Table 2) highlights the particular nature of British development and the fundamental importance of the clearing house role.

TABLE 2 UNITED STATES BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, 1840–1950 (\$m)				
	COMMODITY TRADE		Investment	Service
	Exports	Imports	income	income
1840	124	100	-12	15
1880	851	681	-78	-41
1920	8,481	5,384	476	-51
1950	10,658	9,315	1,306	-352

During the pre-industrial period (1800–1840), America earned a large surplus from shipping and other commercial services; but as Harris points out '... gradually, however, our net surplus from the sale of services was converted into a deficit.'¹⁸ As the USA embarked on her rapid and massive industrialization she relied to some extent—as did European countries—on London to finance, insure and undertake the distribution of products around the world.

¹⁶ The data are exactly the same as those in Barratt Brown's tabulation and come from the same sources.

¹⁷ H. Medick, 'Anfänge und Voraussetzungen des organisierten Kapitalismus in Grossbritannien, 1873–1914', in H. A. Winkler, ed., *Organisierter Kapitalismus, Voraussetzungen und Anfänge*, Göttingen 1974.

¹⁸ Seymour B. Harris, *American Economic History*, New York 1961, pp. 87–88.

If my classification of the different forms of capital is accepted, then, Imlah's data show quite clearly that Barratt Brown is in error when he states that 'earnings of merchanting were never as important as the earnings either on export of goods or on direct exports of capital.'¹⁹ It is the neglect of commercial earnings which led me to argue that, hitherto, the export of capital has been 'overstressed' in the traditional view of British development. Furthermore, there are very good reasons for suspecting that the volume of British capital exports has been greatly overestimated. It is surprising that Barratt Brown does not confront the implications of Platt's downward revisions of the scale of capital exports; to which, of course, I gave emphasis in *Capitalism Divided?* About a third of the capital 'exports' came from abroad. Like other items of the entrepot trade, they were in fact 're-exports', and, as such, the source of commercial profits from intermediation.²⁰ Furthermore, Barratt Brown seems to be unaware of Pollard's massively thorough review of the capital exports debate which endorses Platt's findings.²¹ The revisions have also been accepted by the foremost authority on the history of merchant banking and investment groups in this period. Chapman believes that '... further downward revisions are imminent. The consequences of this for an assessment of Britain's role in international economic development can at present be discerned only in outline, but it will inevitably tone down the stridency of earlier assessments of the role of finance in imperialism and the maintenance of what Jenks called a "rentier governing class" ... Such a revision would harmonize with the more modest economic performances ascribed to them [merchant banks] ... suggesting trade credit to be of more far-reaching importance than foreign loans.'²²

I had a further intention in suggesting that the straightforward quantitative issue of capital exports had been traditionally overstressed. One of the central themes of *Capitalism Divided?* was that the City's separation from domestic industry was not primarily a matter of financial dissociation at this time. I was at pains to argue that the City's typical mode of operation had longer-term consequences. The overriding concern to stabilize the short-term operations of the entrepot role was transmitted in various complex ways to the wider domestic financial system. It was this aspect of nineteenth-century developments which rendered the City and banking system structurally incapable of direct and continuous engagement with production of the kind that occurred in Germany, the USA, Japan and elsewhere.²³

Commercial Capitalism: Some Recent Reappraisals

Barratt Brown enlists the support of non-Marxist historians and I would like to call on reinforcements from the same quarter. Chapman, Tomlinson, Boyce, Mitchie, Crouzet, Cain and Hopkins, and Newton and Porter have all recently moved to a recognition of the significance of mercantile

¹⁹ Barratt Brown, p. 31.

²⁰ D.C.M. Platt, 'British Portfolio Investment Overseas before 1870. Some Doubts', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxxiii, 1980.

²¹ Sidney Pollard, 'Capital Exports, 1870-1914. Harmful or Beneficial?', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxxviii, 1985.

²² Sidney Chapman, *The Rise of Merchant Banking*, London 1984, p. 175.

²³ *Capitalism Divided?*, pp. 142-50, 162-69.

capitalism in the development of the British economy.²⁴ It is especially pertinent that Barratt Brown attempts to use Cain and Hopkins's recent reappraisal to support his own view. Whilst I have serious misgivings about the conceptual utility of the term 'gentlemanly capitalism', the entire tenor of Cain and Hopkins's work is to challenge the very orthodoxy which Barratt Brown seeks to defend. 'Our aim,' they write, 'is not to deny what is irrefutable, namely that Britain industrialized, but rather to suggest that non-industrial, though still capitalist activities were much more important immediately before, during and after the industrial revolution than standard interpretations of economic and imperial history allow... The service sector occupied a far larger and more independent place in the economy than has customarily been acknowledged...'²⁵

In other words, the dispute is not merely a matter of perspective: that is, of panoramic views from great arches or a more down-to-earth inspection—as Barratt Brown's frequent metaphors imply. The traditional view not only has to face revisionist theory, but also recent historical scholarship. As Cain and Hopkins concluded: '... despite their many differences Marxist and non-Marxist historians share a conception of imperialism which is derived from certain assumptions about the place of the industrial revolution in modern British history... We believe that this approach is seriously at variance with what is now known about British economic history during this period.'²⁶ Any general sociological or historical interpretation (Marxist or otherwise) of capitalist development in Britain can no longer afford to rely entirely—as does Barratt Brown—on the classic work of Dobb, Clapham, Court, Deane and others.

Sterling's International Roles

Whatever the importance of London's international commercial activities, it is generally agreed that these were in large part made impossible by the willingness of the emerging capitalist world order to use sterling for its transactions. However, Barratt Brown takes this to be proof of the dominance of the productive economy: '... the overseas role of the pound depended on the strength of the British economy.'²⁷ In short, Barratt Brown's basic criticism is that I deny the existence of a relationship of direct correspondence between the use of a national currency as world money and the strength of the host economy. He also raises a subsidiary objection: 'The whole of Ingham's argument is predicated in any case on the assumption that a strong pound is guarantee of its successful role.' Rather, he suggests that 'it is a stable currency that is needed.'²⁸ His allegation is simply untrue: throughout *Capitalism Divided?*, I stressed that

²⁴ Sidney Chapman, op. cit., B.R. Tomlinson, 'The Contraction of England: National Decline and the Loss of Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xi, 1, October 1982, R.C. Mitchell, 'Options, Concessions, Syndicates, and the Provision of Venture Capital, 1880-1913', *Business History*, xxiii, 2, 1981, François Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy*, London 1982, chapters II and 12; P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I: The Old Colonial System, 1688-1830', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. xxxix, 4, 1986, 'II New Imperialism, 1830-1945', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xi, 1, 1987, Robert W.D. Boyce, *British Capitalism at the Crossroads, 1919-1932*, Cambridge 1987, Scott Newton and Delwyn Porter, *Modernisation Frustrated: The Politics of Industrial Decline in Britain since 1900*, London 1988.

²⁵ Cain and Hopkins, I, op. cit., pp. 303-4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 302.

²⁷ Barratt Brown, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

London's commercial and financial roles required a stable and, therefore, predictable value for sterling.²⁹ Indeed, 'strong' can be construed to mean stable in the sense of immunity from speculative attack. 'Strength' in the sense of high value may be the effect of a strong domestic economy, but anyone with the most rudimentary knowledge of twentieth-century monetary history will be aware that other factors are also involved. Again one is forced to wonder just how much care Barratt Brown took in reading my book before launching into his polemic. He seems to think, for example, that I contradict myself by what he takes to be my reluctant admission that the global acceptance of sterling could be linked to the strength of the British economy: 'Yet on several occasions Ingham refers to the need for a strong national economy to manage the international economy and provide the world's money. He even sometimes recognizes that this depends on productive capital and exploited labour, though sometimes arguing otherwise . . . Ingham does in the end recognize this when he observes that Britain had the strongest economy and thus the "top" currency in the nineteenth century.'³⁰ Such an interpretation is bewildering. He contends that I have two separate and contradictory arguments, yet one of the underlying arguments of *Capitalism Divided?* is that the use of a currency as world money does not depend exclusively and entirely on the strength of the host economy. The opening paragraph of chapter 5 contains an unambiguous statement of what I take to be the basis of the City's position in the nineteenth century: 'During the nineteenth century Britain's manufacturing superiority and share of world trade helped transform the City into the "natural" commercial and financial centre of the world system. However, the City's position was never a simple reflection of this economic strength. In addition to the productive base, the following may be seen as the proximate conditions of existence for the City's growth: (i) the unprecedented 100 years peace between the major European powers (1815-1914)—the Pax Britannica; (ii) the commitment to economic liberalism (1820-1931)—in particular free trade; (iii) the reintroduction and formalization of the domestic gold standard which, significantly, lasted as long as the peace itself.'³¹

Furthermore, I stressed that the three conditions were mutually sustaining and could not be reduced in their origins or persistence to the exigencies posed by (or functional requirements of) capitalist industrialization, nor to the explicit demands of the industrial bourgeoisie. In some respects, this package of conditions was the result of contingency—for example, the outcome of the Napoleonic Wars. But, more importantly, they also had quite independent geo-political and institutional bases. Indeed, if this were not the case, it would be extremely difficult to provide a satisfactory account of how and why Britain continued in this commitment to nineteenth-century economic liberalism and the gold standard long after the economic conditions for their maintenance had disappeared. A central question of *Capitalism Divided?* is how one is to explain the persistence and growth of the City in the face of incipient productive decline. In my lengthy answer I argued that the City's political conditions of existence had a marked impact on the structure of the state and the

²⁹ The index to *Capitalism Divided?* contains five separate references to sterling's stability

³⁰ Barratt Brown, p. 27

³¹ *Capitalism Divided?*, p. 96

composition of the dominant class which, in complex ways, permitted (but did not simply determine) the reproduction of the City's roles in the twentieth century. This, I stressed, occurred in the face of tremendous economic and political difficulties and, of course, to the disadvantage of the productive economy. In fact, this involves the clear recognition of a discontinuity of the kind Barratt Brown argues I am incapable of perceiving from the elevation of my particular 'great arch'. In the nineteenth century sterling was the strongest and, therefore 'Top' currency and prime candidate for global use; but this was not its exclusive basis. During a large part of the twentieth century, it was a 'Master' currency: that is to say, its use was imposed politically on an Empire, Commonwealth and Sterling Area.³²

However, it would be a mistake to view this change as a radical disjuncture in the bases for sterling's global use. In both centuries, sterling's position was the result of a complex interplay of 'material', 'political' and 'symbolic' factors. International monetary phenomena have never been as simple to comprehend as Barratt Brown's uncompromising materialism makes them out to be. To repeat: there appears to be no direct, immediate and objective correspondence between the strength of a national economy and the international uses to which its currency may be put. This is always mediated by two interrelated factors. First, in the face of uncertainty about a currency's 'real' strength, its trustworthiness is usually secured by state action to guarantee its formal validity. Any such political pledge is obviously limited by the currency's substantive validity—that is, its economic basis. However, the force of such limits can vary very widely indeed and sterling performed roles between the late nineteenth century and the 1970s far beyond those which an 'objective' assessment of its economic strength would have warranted. Second, national currencies can only be used globally if their domestic financial systems possess the appropriate institutional structure of banks and money markets. As I argued in *Capitalism Divided?*, the dollar did not take over sterling's roles in any way approaching comprehensiveness after 1931. Apart from the New Deal policies and opposition from industrialists, the USA simply did not have a sufficiently concentrated and centralized financial system under the very close control of the central bank and Federal Reserve.³³ With regard to nineteenth-century Britain, Tomlinson has recently suggested that after about 1860 the strength of sterling was not necessarily a reflection of the strength of the rest of the economy. London was not only the place through which trade and finance were organized, 'but also the centre at which the balances of trade were lodged. The strength of sterling was greatly aided by the flow of short-term capital [and] this was the result of particular institutional arrangements, rather than a reflection of any particular strength of the national economy... Britain could dominate the world economy and act as a successful imperial power only so long as other nations chose to use the City of London as the contact point for their bilateral and multilateral transactions.'³⁴ Underlying the choice to use the only well-developed clearing house in the nineteenth century was the continued political pledge to maintain the gold-sterling standard,

³² These distinctions are taken from Susan Strange's fundamental work *Sterling and British Policy* (London 1971) and not Richard Minos as Barratt Brown incorrectly states.

³³ *Capitalism Divided?*, p. 203.

³⁴ Tomlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

which was in fact becoming increasingly flimsy in objective economic terms. If the relationships between, on the one hand, industrial productivity, strength of capital and the industrial economy and, on the other, the global use of a national currency were as obvious as Barratt Brown avers, then the history of international monetary relations—and much else—would have been very different.

The City and the British State

Unravelling the inter-relations of what I termed the core institutional nexus of British society (City-Bank of England-Treasury) formed the main part of my explanation of how the City was socially reproduced during the twentieth century. In fact, the issue can be stated with more force: in strictly economic terms, conditions were actually antithetical to the preservation of the City's international activities as the twentieth century progressed. After 1918, in the 1930s, and from 1945 to the present, political strategies have assumed paramount importance. Moreover, the pursuit of trade, fiscal and foreign exchange policies favourable to the City was not without opposition—however muted and sporadic. It seemed difficult to explain the origins and persistence of these interdependencies in terms of the prevailing theoretical Marxist orthodoxies of the 1970s. The institutional connections of the City, Bank and Treasury were clearly not the outcome of the City's power as a so-called 'fraction' of capital ('instrumentalist' theories). In the light of early nineteenth-century history, it appeared to be even more inappropriate to consider the 'core nexus' as a functional response to the 'requirements' of capitalist development (for example, as a means of exporting 'surplus' capital and the exploitation of overseas possessions—that is, the 'functionalist' theory of finance-capital imperialism). I argued at length that both theories were fraught with serious logical and empirical difficulties and stressed, rather, the interplay between classes and state institutions. I considered the latter as possessing their own interests in the production exercise of power.³⁵ In his summary of what is a very condensed conclusion to chapter 6 of *Capitalism Divided?*, Barratt Brown presents a parody of my arguments. It is unfortunately necessary, therefore, to set the record straight by quoting at length from this conclusion.

Although overwhelming manufacturing superiority in the nineteenth century made Britain the natural commercial centre in objective economic terms, political factors have had important effects from the earliest times . . . The monetary and commercial policies which eventually became the basis of the City's activities were the products of complex political and economic interests which did not include the industrial bourgeoisie as a major force . . . , the monetary and fiscal reforms were also aimed at rationalizing the state's finances and dealing with the chronic indebtedness which the Napoleonic Wars had exacerbated. These measures were intended to weaken the system of aristocratic parasitism and patronage of 'old corruption' and the state's dependence on the 'money powers'. In other words, . . . the state set itself against a section of the traditional dominant class, but not at the behest of the emerging industrial bourgeoisie. If the 'economical reformers' had any specific interests in mind, it was those of the new generation of merchants who had captured much of the Dutch and French

³⁵ For a summary of these arguments see *Capitalism Divided?* pp. 229–32. See also the clear implications of John Zysman's *Governments, Markets and Growth: Financial Systems and the Politics of Industrial Change*, Ithaca 1983.

trade and who would profit by a free trade/gold standard regime . The early monetary and commercial reforms had a critical impact on key institutions in the modern British state and economy, on the structural development of the dominant class, and on the financial system as a whole . . . the core institutional nexus of British society (City-Bank of England-Treasury) became fixed in the basic form it has retained to this day. The foundation for the connection between these institutions lies in the mutual interest they have in the production of stable money forms. This interdependence is not simply based on the City as a dominant fraction of capital. To be sure, the pursuit of fiscal and monetary orthodoxy by the Bank and Treasury sustained the gold standard and later sterling's exchange value and, thereby, the City's international position. But these policies were also an independent source of power for the Bank and Treasury in their own respective domains—that is, in the banking system and the state bureaucracy.³⁶

I also stressed the occurrence of unintended (and frequently ironic) consequences of intended actions in the development of the nexus during the nineteenth century. For example, the 'economical reformers' wished to free the state from dependence on the 'money powers'; but their legislation ultimately strengthened the City and via the Bank drew it closer to the Treasury. The Bank Charter Acts were intended to curtail the Bank's powers by establishing a supposedly self-regulating monetary system; but, of course, the system was crisis-prone and required discretionary management and, hence, an increase in the Bank's autonomous power.

The precise nature of Barratt Brown's objections to all this is difficult to pin down. He questions my arguments concerning the institutional power of the core nexus as follows: 'A nexus cannot simply be assumed from what both Ingham and Anderson describe as an agreement not to intervene.'³⁷ I am not at all sure what this is supposed to mean; but there is no 'assumption' of the 'nexus' on my part. I devoted at least half the book to establishing, elaborating and substantiating the historical utility of the concept. However, it is just about possible to discern a general basis for Barratt Brown's critique in his tacit adherence to both Marxist 'functionalism' and 'instrumentalism'. For Barratt Brown, the exigencies posed by the capitalist mode of production require stabilizing and crisis-avoidance measures, and this is assured by bourgeois participation in the state. Thus, on numerous occasions throughout his article, he insists that the City's primary function was to channel investment into production overseas; but as we have seen, this is a very one-sidedly exaggerated account. The City just cannot be seen only as the conduit through which 'surplus' capital flowed and as the handmaiden of finance-capital imperialism. On the other hand, he argues that the Bank Charter Acts cannot have had the significance for the City that I assign to them because: '... there could scarcely be imagined a clearer example of an industrial bourgeois incumbent of high office than Sir Robert Peel, son of a Lancashire millowner and twice Prime Minister.'³⁸ Presumably this line of reasoning accounts also for Barratt Brown's jibe that 'none of the three parties (City, Bank and Treasury) knew what they were doing until clever fellows like Ingham and Anderson came along and showed us.'³⁹

* *Capitalism Dismantled?*, pp 6-8

³⁷ Barratt Brown, p 36

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p 34

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p 36

However, I made frequent reference to the collusion of the metropolitan elite in the three institutions and devoted special attention to the debt and almost conspiratorial nature of the handling of the Baring crisis. More importantly, Barratt Brown displays a strange unwillingness to acknowledge that intended actions have unintended consequences. Thus, because he seems so sure that 'Huskisson was thinking about the export of goods', he infers that the commercial legislation of the 1820s which removed barriers to the re-export trade cannot have had the effect of stimulating the City's entrepot activities.⁴⁰ Knowing the class origin of historical agents, what they were thinking and what they intended to achieve can never provide us with a full explanation of long-term patterns of development.

Finally, there are two further irritating instances of misrepresentation: 'The crux of Ingham's case,' writes Barratt Brown, 'is that the Treasury linked together the landowning interest and the financial oligarchy at the expense of industry.'⁴¹ This could hardly be a crux of my thesis because nowhere in *Capitalism Divided?* do I present such a clumsy historical interpretation. Second, I am accused of making the 'strange assumption' that conflicts did not arise among the Treasury, City and Bank. However, in an astonishing contradiction only four lines later, Barratt Brown corrects himself and accurately cites my book as evidence for such 'struggles and disagreements'.⁴²

It is precisely the City's impact on the British state which has been taken up by several recent authors. Scott Newton and Dilwyn Porter endorse my account of the core institutional nexus and use it to organize their *Modernisation Frustrated: The Politics of Industrial Decline in Britain since 1900*. Robert Boyce's detailed monograph, *British Capitalism at the Crossroads, 1919-1932*, takes a similar line and also recognizes the fundamentally mercantile character of the City as 'a centre of international markets, dependent only slightly upon the nation's economic performance'.⁴³ Boyce, like Alan Booth in his recent paper, also supports my view that many policies which have favoured the City—most notably the return to gold in 1925—were also welcomed by the Treasury and the Bank of England as they helped to re-establish their independent institutional power in their respective domains of public finance and the banking system.⁴⁴ In his otherwise very favourable review in this journal, Colin Leys also expressed doubts about my insistence that state institutions must be seen as possessing their own power and interests. Leys accepts that the Treasury 'had a vested interest in the restoration of the gold standard; it offered a prospect of restoring its preeminence in Whitehall that the war had eroded. But it is equally true that the Board of Trade had a vested interest in launching a long-term, state-led project for industrial modernization at the end of the Second World War. It is hard to explain why the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* It should be noted that Barratt Brown omits the last part of a quotation from Huskisson (p. 35), which I cited in *Capitalism Divided?*, and changes the meaning considerably. Huskisson was complaining that the maintenance of the gold standard was enriching the money dealers, but that the deflation and frequent crises meant that 'the wages of labour have been too low and the profits of fructifying or productive capital less than they ought to be' *Capitalism Divided?* p. 100.

⁴¹ Barratt Brown, p. 38.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴³ Boyce, p. 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31, Alan Booth, 'Britain in the 1930s: a Managed Economy', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xl, 4, 1987.

former interest prevailed, and the latter was defeated, without recourse to the balance of class power.⁴⁵ Whilst not denying the significance of class power, it is quite a simple matter to answer Leys's question. The Treasury's power over 'second-rate' state agencies, such as the Board of Trade, derived from several sources—both 'internal' and 'external' to the state. With respect to the former, the Treasury had the power of the public purse and, with the Bank, control over Britain's exchange rate and currency policy. Second, by the 1920s its domination of the state bureaucracy had assumed—after nearly a century's struggle—a constitutional legitimacy. Similar points can be made about the Treasury's clashes with the Department of Economic Affairs in the 1960s. The extent of the Treasury's autonomous power is also apparent in the 1930s, when what may be crudely seen as the City's 'class power' was at its lowest ebb. The Treasury pursued its objectives as before; maintaining the fiction of balanced budgets, deflecting mounting criticism and so on, until the exigencies of wartime production led to its political demotion in the state apparatus.⁴⁶

A serious distortion is insinuated throughout 'Away with All The Great Arches'. Barratt Brown implies and at times explicitly states that *Capitalism Divided?* argues (or can be used to substantiate the view) that 'there was no real industrial revolution in Britain and that British capitalism was rooted in commercial and not industrial capital accumulation.'⁴⁷ It is, for example, a gross misrepresentation to imply that my book could have fostered such nonsense as: 'The revolutionary industrial innovators in textiles and railway-building—Arkwright, Watt, Hargreaves, Boulton, Paul, Darby and Brindley in the eighteenth century, Brassey, Stevenson, Brunel, Wilkinson, Faraday in the nineteenth—are reduced to some sort of commercial intermediaries . . .'⁴⁸ The title—*Capitalism Divided?*—was chosen with some care for the content of the book. I intended to convey my concern with the relationships between the three types of capital and, especially, that between commerce and banking, on the one hand, and productive capital on the other. In general terms I questioned the axiom that productive capital was completely dominant (both economically and politically) at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. In this respect, any tolerably careful reading should disclose that my intention was to explain why the efforts of the industrial modernizers were so enfeebled from the late nineteenth century onwards. Second, as Anderson and Leys correctly emphasize, the separation of the City and industry was ultimately based on the existence of 'a world economic space segmented into independent units' which permitted the emergence of 'a major clearing house of universal scope': that is, a centre of commercial capitalism which was not directly and exclusively dependent on the productive capitalism of the host nation.⁴⁹ Neither argument could be remotely construed as suggesting that capitalist industrialization never took place in Britain!

⁴⁵ Colin Leys, 'The Formation of British Capital', *New Left Review* 160, November-December 1986, p. 117.

⁴⁶ *Capitalism Divided?* *passim*. Barratt Brown displays a symptomatic misunderstanding when he cites the penetration of the Cabinet and the Treasury by industrial representatives during World War II as evidence of industrial capital's general power. The Treasury temporarily lost power during the war in order that a national productive economy could be organized and this is precisely why industrial capital assumed a brief ascendancy.

⁴⁷ Barratt Brown, p. 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Anderson, p. 33.

Nevertheless, there is mounting evidence to suggest that the traditional conception of the 'industrial revolution', which Barratt Brown staunchly defends, has been overdrawn. His own version of orthodoxy lacks any real substance. On the one hand, he merely refers to the heroic deeds of the entrepreneurs—Arkwright, the mills and canals etc. On the other hand, in extolling the performance of the economy, he offers the limp assertion that 'British productivity held up remarkably well until the First World War.'³⁰ However, any such judgement must be comparative and, as Barratt Brown concedes, the USA and Germany outperformed Britain from the onset of their own industrialization. The hyperbole of the traditional conception is evident after consulting such recent works as Maddison's *Phases of Capitalist Development* and Lee's *The British Economy since 1700*.³¹ According to Maddison, Britain's growth between 1820 and 1979 was the slowest of twelve advanced countries. Most of the increase in British GNP and GDP per head was generated in the twentieth century, especially since 1950. More significantly with regard to Barratt Brown's arguments, Lee questions the orthodox conceptualization of a radical discontinuity in British economic growth associated with the so-called industrial revolution.³²

Finance and Industry

The insistence that the City was involved in financing production to a far greater extent than I recognize is scattered throughout Barratt Brown's essay and is, of course, a tacit reassertion of finance-capital theory. No new data are presented in support of this claim, nor can they be. The chronically low level of investment in British production since the eighteenth century is an established fact and a unique feature of British development.³³

My alleged failure to mention the mid-nineteenth-century Company Acts which permitted limited liability is presented as evidence of a one-sided distortion of Britain's economic development. Barratt Brown considers this legislation to be equally significant as the Bank Charter Acts and the means by which 'investment in industry at home' occurred.³⁴ But, the index to *Capitalism Divided?* contains five entries under 'limited liability'. My discussion was based on Payne's work, which is widely accepted as the standard account of nineteenth-century business structure. The implication of Barratt Brown's comments—that it was enacted to serve the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie—is simply not borne out by the evidence. Limited liability was adopted in 1855 after twenty years of parliamentary enquiry and the initial impetus came from middle-class philanthropists who wished to create safer investment opportunities for the working and lower middle classes—not from 'the industrialists

³⁰ Barratt Brown, p. 27.

³¹ A. Maddison, *Phases of Capitalist Development*, Oxford 1982, C. H. Lee, *The British Economy Since 1700: A Macro-economic Perspective*, Cambridge 1986.

³² Lee, p. 23. 'All the quantitative indices show a slow but accelerating rate of growth, balanced growth encompassing most sectors of the economy and a very modest, if continuous rate of structural change. Increased growth in the early nineteenth century and small reduction in growth rates in the later part of the century require explanation, but their dimensions hardly warrant labels like "industrial revolution" or "great depression".'

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 31. 'It was one of the unique aspects of British development. Home investment throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was exceptionally low in relation to GNP, for most of the time less than half that of the investment ratio in other developing countries. Indeed, this level of investment was similar to that enjoyed in more recent times by such countries as Paraguay, Malaysia and El Salvador.'

³⁴ Barratt Brown, p. 26.

themselves, whose voices were seldom heard in the discussions'. Moreover, it was not until very late in the nineteenth century that the Joint Stock Companies Acts had any impact on industrial finance and, even then, this was small in comparison with developments in continental Europe.⁵⁵ The implied case for the existence of an embryonic 'finance-capital' in mid-nineteenth century Britain has no historical basis whatsoever. Indeed, Barratt Brown concedes as much in his somewhat contradictory admission that nineteenth-century industry was self-financed. 'But by the early twentieth century this had changed', he argues, and quotes a passage from *Capitalism Divided?* which shows the rapid increase in the number of domestic companies quoted on the London Stock Exchange. However, it is all too easy to fit the occurrence of this first merger boom in British industry into a crude and misleading theory of capitalist development which was originally generalized from the German case. This approach misses a number of very pertinent aspects of the singular British experience. First, the movement towards concentration in industry was far less marked here than in comparable economies; and, second, the London Stock Exchange's role was very limited and the clearing banks' involvement was negligible.⁵⁶ The contemporary industrial and political concern at Britain's increasingly archaic industrial structure, its technological underdevelopment, and its separation from the financial system is firmly established and has recently received further elaboration in Newton and Porter's *Modernisation Frustrated*. Davenport-Hines's biography of Dudley Docker not only shows just how some of the successful mergers were financed, but also follows Docker's increasing exasperation with the City's reluctance to become involved with domestic industry. To counter this deficiency, Docker set up the British Stockholders' Trust (1918) to raise finance for the rationalization of industry along German lines. This provoked hostility from the City establishment, which threatened to deny access to the Stock Exchange to any provincial brokers who held shares in the Trust.⁵⁷

The arguments that Barratt Brown adduces for close finance-industry relations since 1945 are equally flimsy, and also methodologically flawed. Simply reporting from his own research that merchant bankers sat on the boards of half the top 120 home industrial companies is not very compelling. The closeness of finance-industry relations—even when measured in this manner—can only be assessed comparatively. The last ten years have seen a massive proliferation of research on interlocking directorships in all the major advanced countries and it shows far lower finance-industry relations in Britain as measured by banker participation.⁵⁸ However, even these extensive and sophisticated studies based on network analysis have quite clear limitations. Knowing that banks and industrial

⁵⁵ P. L. Payne, *British Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1974, p. 39. See also Crouzet. It must be noted that limited liability was not 'an innovation [which] must surely rank with those of the industrial revolution' (Barratt Brown, pp. 25 and 26). Restrictions had been imposed on joint stock companies by the Bubble Act (1720) and such financial organization was prevalent in France, New York State and elsewhere in the eighteenth century.

⁵⁶ Payne, *op. cit.*, Lee, chapter 3.

⁵⁷ R. P. T. Davenport-Hines, *Dudley Docker: The Life and Times of a Trade Warrior*, Cambridge 1984. The significance of this work lies in the fact that despite its overtly empiricist method, the City-industry opposition is captured through the experiences of one of Britain's leading industrialists.

⁵⁸ For the most recent survey see John Scott, *Capitalist Property and Financial Power: A Comparative Study of Britain, the United States and Japan*, Brighton 1986.

companies have directors in common does not in itself tell us what kind of role the interlocks play in corporate banking and industrial strategy. To generalize, on the basis of his own limited data, that British merchant bankers on industrial boards 'performed the same coordinating function as the big banks in Germany and the zaibatsu in Japan' is not only wild, but also mistaken speculation.⁵⁹

The relationships between finance and industry (and the state) are primarily the result of the more fundamental structural means by which credit and finance are created, distributed and controlled. Zysman's work remains the essential starting point in unravelling these complexities. Even orthodox economists now make distinctions between bank-based and market-based financial systems in a similar way to Zysman and myself.⁶⁰ Bank credit-based systems such as Japan's and Germany's exhibit two characteristics not found to any marked degree in Britain: a high level of external funding and long-term direct involvement of banks in corporate organization and strategy. The structure of the German and Japanese financial systems is such that the banks become involved to ensure a rate of return on their direct investments. Most City representatives on industrial boards are there as 'information receptors' and/or organizers of take-overs, 'dawn raids' etc, or the defence against such events. Their activities are structured by the market-based financial system which, in the absence of bank domination of industrial finance, permits the speculative short-term practices for which the British system is renowned. 'Commercial' profits are realized in this kind of financial intermediation and must be distinguished from the returns on investment typical of the bank-based type of finance capital.⁶¹

Finally, Barratt Brown's attempt to demonstrate the contemporary involvement of the City in industry is based on a methodological error: 'Contrary to what Ingham says about the finance of industry... the top 116 largest UK companies took 90 per cent of the new capital issued on the stock exchange.'⁶² Recent research shows that over 90 per cent of corporate finance came from retentions over the period 1949-1977, only 7.7 per cent from the issue of securities, and a little over 2 per cent from bank credit. The contrast with Japan, Germany, France and even the market-based American financial system is a significant one and is the only way to evaluate the kind of claims made by Barratt Brown. The top 116 companies may have taken over 90 per cent of the new issues; but it was 90 per cent of very little in comparative terms and merely serves to illustrate what Barratt Brown denies—the persistent disengagement of the City and industry.⁶³

The City and Empire

The aims of my brief treatment of the connections between the City and Empire were very limited in scope: I questioned the view that the City's pre-eminence derived from a position as the nerve-centre of Britain's

⁵⁹ Barratt Brown, p. 62.

⁶⁰ Colin Mayer, 'Financial Systems and Corporate Investment', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 3/4, 1986.

⁶¹ In the 1970s, the 'Big Three' German banks owned 35 per cent of the shares of the top 74 German enterprises (E. Smith, *The West German Economy*, London 1983.) The comparable figure for Britain is less than one per cent. See Wilson Report, London 1980, p. 300.

⁶² Barratt Brown, p. 62.

⁶³ See Colin Mayer, and *Capitalism Divided?*, chapter 3, which Barratt Brown completely ignores.

'finance-capital imperialism', and I made some suggestions concerning the relationships between the Empire and the City's commercial hegemony. In its simplest form, the old Lenin/Hobson orthodoxy is untenable on empirical grounds.⁶⁴ In the first place, there was no clear and direct connection between British trade and the growth of Empire in the nineteenth century. Almost two and a half million square miles were added in the late nineteenth century—mainly desert and underdeveloped land, as Crouzet points out; but trade with the Empire remained static and remarkably small—around 25 per cent of Britain's total trade.⁶⁵ Second, the very same point can be made with respect to investment: most capital went to non-Imperial destinations. As Barratt Brown concedes: 'The City was interested in investing funds all over the world and did not wish to be limited to the Empire large as it was.'⁶⁶ Furthermore, as we have seen, the amount of British capital channelled through the City has been overestimated.

Nevertheless, Barratt Brown reiterates the old highly questionable view that 'the pressures of British industrial capital behind this expansion can hardly be denied.'⁶⁷ Many industrialists did have a vision of Empire which Lenin, Hobson and others thought was a reality, but the defeat of their strategy was brought about, at least in part, by those very same interests who did not wish to have their commercial and financial intermediation restricted to anything less than the whole world.⁶⁸ Of course, in the 1930s the Empire was put to the kinds of uses which Barratt Brown argues were the primary motives in the late nineteenth century. With the 1931 sterling crisis and the world depression, the City was forced to retreat to the security of the Empire (and even flirt temporarily with the finance of domestic industry).⁶⁹ As I suggested in *Capitalism Divided?*: '... it has been all too readily assumed that the intentional uses to which the Empire was put in the twentieth century can neatly explain its origins.'⁷⁰ Once again, Barratt Brown does not seem to realize that the demonstration of functional economic links at any particular point in time does not necessarily imply a causal connection. I offered the hypothesis that the growth of formal Empire in the late nineteenth century was, in part, the ironic unplanned consequence of attempting to maintain the Pax Britannica and, thereby, the economic dominance of which commercial hegemony was such an important part. Britain's leading competitors were becoming increasingly impatient with this regime and wished to challenge it with

⁶⁴ Cain and Hopkins, Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, London 1987, *Capitalism Divided?*, pp. 117–27

⁶⁵ Crouzet, p. 356

⁶⁶ Barratt Brown, p. 33

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32

⁶⁸ Newton and Porter, Chapter 1. They cite the views of George Byng, chairman of OMC, who made 'due distinction between industry and commerce, between manufacturing and trading, between production and exchange'. Free trade, he argued, had made merchant bankers into merchant princes. It is interesting to note that a very early critic of the capital exports thesis anticipated the present debate (and the nature of Platt's revisions) by almost eighty years. Rosenzweig (President of the Foreign Chambers of Commerce in London) commented on Pruthi's paper on overseas investment (delivered to the Royal Statistical Society in 1909) as follows: 'Great Britain acts only as an intermediary, as honest broker working in all parts of the world, taking over—to a greater extent with the money of her customers—the loans of other nations. In a word, although the investment power of Britain is very great, London is the principal intermediary between Europe and other parts of the world for the placing of foreign securities issues here.' Quoted in Tomlinson, pp. 63–64.

⁶⁹ *Capitalism Divided?*, pp. 195–99. Lee: 'By the 1930s, the internationalist trade and financial policies of Victorian Britain had been abandoned, and British trade followed by British investment became increasingly oriented towards the Empire. Thus there emerged the sterling area.' *Op. cit.*, pp. 174–5.

⁷⁰ *Capitalism Divided?*, p. 117

their own spheres of influence. Other factors were clearly involved, but Britain's response to her rivals' ambitions created a politically autonomous process of pre-emptive annexation which was interwoven with the pursuit of economic interest.

None of this 'requires us to suppose', as Barratt Brown mischievously avers, 'that there had been in the Empire no sugar and cotton plantations, no tea and rubber estates . . . or mills or factories.'⁷¹ Apart from the conflation of the plantation slavery of the old colonial system with the imperial activities of the late nineteenth century, the stress on Britain's direct involvement or investment in factory production overseas is mistaken. In the mid-nineteenth century, less than one per cent of British portfolio investment overseas went into manufacturing; by 1913 this had risen to just under 5 per cent.⁷² Barratt Brown argues as if any concession to my notions about Empire and the City's commercial capitalism necessarily involves a criticism of the traditional view. But this is not so; the respective approaches are not logically exclusive. It is, rather, the factual basis of the traditional view which is difficult to uphold.

My 'most blatant misconception concerns the role played by India.'⁷³ Saul's standard account has established that during the late nineteenth century Britain had large trade deficits with many of the advanced countries (e.g. £50m with the USA and £45m with continental Europe by 1910) and surpluses with underdeveloped ones—especially India (£60m by 1910). Thus, India occupied a key position in Britain's balance of payments and, thereby, in the whole system of multinational payments which had become centred on London.⁷⁴ From the late nineteenth century onwards, as Tomlinson and I have argued, this system was based largely on the existence of the City's institutions, the willingness and the ability to maintain the gold-sterling standard. The stability and trustworthiness of the currency were absolutely essential for the maintenance of international liquidity and, in this respect, the Indian surplus was crucial. It 'ensured', as Crouzet argues, 'that the City was truly the economic heart of the world.'⁷⁵ Barratt Brown will have none of this: 'The Indian surplus was transferred to investment elsewhere, as I have shown at length in *Economics of Imperialism*.'⁷⁶ There is, of course, no way of showing that the Indian surplus was literally 'transferred' into investment; *Economics of Imperialism* merely quotes Saul's original inference that it would have been impossible to indulge so heavily in overseas investment 'had not British

⁷¹ Barratt Brown, p. 31

⁷² Pollard, p. 490. Recent research has shown that British investment groups abroad had a more 'modern' form of organization than domestic firms and equalled them in size, but 'the groups still performed the mercantile function in the sense that they were the "local" experts with capital and supporting services in the countries or sectors of the world in which they specialised' Stanley Chapman, 'British-Based Investment Groups before 1914', paper delivered at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 11 October 1985. Miss Wilkins ('The Free Standing Company, 1870-1914: an Important Type of British Foreign Direct Investment', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xli, 2, 1988) contrasts British direct investment with that of the USA: 'thousands of companies (which) unlike the American model, did not grow out of the domestic operations of existing enterprises that had their headquarters in Britain'. They were 'little more than a brass nameplate some place in the City' and, therefore, often failed to meet the challenge of other countries' successfully managed overseas operations (p. 264). See also Charles Jones, *International Business in the 19th Century*, Brighton 1987.

⁷³ Barratt Brown, p. 31

⁷⁴ S. B. Saul, *Standards in British Overseas Trade 1870-1914*, Liverpool 1960

⁷⁵ Crouzet, p. 370

⁷⁶ Barratt Brown, p. 31

exports found a wide open market in 'India during the last few years before the outbreak of war...'⁷⁷ Obviously, anything which led to a balance-of-payments surplus facilitated the export of capital; but, within limits, this is not incompatible with the Indian surplus's role in stabilizing the currency on the exchanges. Moreover, de Cecco detects a conscious intent to this end on the part of the British monetary authorities.⁷⁸ At the very least, the traditional view must consider the following revisions. First, the growth of the formal Empire in the late nineteenth century cannot be explained adequately by the functional necessity for the export of surplus goods or capital. The 'causes' and 'function' of overseas expansion have been hopelessly confused in the Hobson/Lenin tradition. Second, even if one adheres to this view, there are no logical or empirical grounds for denying that the Empire also had a role in maintaining London's commercial capitalism.

Conclusions

Unfortunately, this necessarily protracted defence of my arguments prevents any thorough treatment of Barratt Brown's comments on the City's present role in the world system and the emergence of what Susan Strange has termed 'casino capitalism'. Barratt Brown suggests, and then rejects, the possibility that these developments may be a vindication of my general thesis. Recent events in the City are 'a new phenomenon and there is nothing particularly English about it.'⁷⁹ To be sure, the volume of financial speculation has increased immensely and has been facilitated by London's link-up with Tokyo and New York, and the emergence of twenty-four-hour trading; but again Barratt Brown jumps to hasty ill-considered conclusions about the degree of discontinuity that this represents. First, as Perry Anderson correctly observed in 'Figures of Descent', London remains pre-eminent in its traditional roles in commercial insurance, foreign exchange dealing, commodity broking etc. Even with the abolition of exchange controls, the foreign earnings of pension funds are only about half those of commodity trading and brokerage.⁸⁰ The Stock Exchange may provide the most newsworthy copy and capture Barratt Brown's imagination, but is not co-extensive with the City. Second, Barratt Brown's explanation of the expansion of speculation is too simplistic. It is, he insists, yet another general crisis of capitalism which arises 'when world competition grows and profit rates decline'.⁸¹ However, such a starkly materialist approach is unable fully to grasp these developments, and especially London's part in the anarchy. As with sterling and the productive economy, the relationship between declining rates of profit and speculation is not direct and unmediated. Financial speculation of the recent kind can only occur if the 'casinos' exist. As in Monte Carlo, Las Vegas and elsewhere, the ability to remain in business requires a

⁷⁷ Michael Barratt Brown, *Economics of Imperialism*, Harmondsworth 1974, p. 195

⁷⁸ M. de Cecco, *Money and Empires*, Oxford 1974. He sees India as the main stabilizing element in the international payments system whose surplus was deposited in London. In this way the City could maintain its leading position and until 1914 remained the main source of international liquidity. See especially chapter 4, 'Indian Monetary Vicissitudes'.

⁷⁹ Barratt Brown, p. 48

⁸⁰ William M. Clarke, *How the City of London Works*, London 1986, p. 124. Anthony Hinton, *City without a State*, London 1987.

⁸¹ Barratt Brown, p. 48. The same 'line' is taken by Alex Callinicos, 'Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System', *New Left Review* 169.

politically generated freedom to operate. Ten years ago, in their evidence to the Wilson Committee, the Bankers Association insisted that the City's greatest asset remained the absence from regulation—a continuity which only two world wars have disrupted. Just how does Barratt Brown propose to explain the existence of the supposedly 'new' role? How did a rapidly declining productive economy come to be the hub of the new global financial (dis)intermediation? Why not Frankfurt? Furthermore, the emphasis Barratt Brown places on the ownership of the City is largely misplaced. On the one hand, it has always been a foreign enclave to some degree. In the early nineteenth century, the family firms which migrated to the City usually became permanent residents, unlike their modern counterparts—the employees of corporate banks. On the other hand, the very existence and control of the assets in the various markets are more significant than mere legal ownership in their impact on British society.⁸²

If the explanation of the City's current activities is as simple as Barratt Brown insists, then I wasted much time and effort in uncovering its historical roots and political strengths. And we are asked to consider that this 'new' role will disappear—just as quickly as it emerged—with continued declining rates of profit and international working-class solidarity. I have my doubts.

⁸² In addition to *Capitalism Divided?*, see Jerry Conley and Laurence Harris, *The City of Capital*, Oxford 1983, chapter 3

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The New Class Basis of Chilean Politics

In the plebiscite held in Chile in October 1988, the attention of the international press focused overwhelmingly on the exposed position of the ageing head of the dictatorship, Augusto Pinochet. For the new power bloc, however, comprising the armed forces, the capitalist class, bankers and technocrats, the primary concern has been not the plebiscite as such but the need to safeguard the accumulation regime established over the past fifteen years.¹ The Pinochet regime served a number of invaluable historical purposes: destruction of the Popular Unity government and of the socialist movements; consolidation of the military and civilian bureaucracies; integration of Chile into international financial, commercial and agricultural circuits; relocation of political debate on the terrain of private market discourse; and the elimination of most anti-imperialist intellectual currents. In the process of realizing these aims, however, the dictatorship incurred numerous enemies, provoked large-scale, sustained opposition, and eventually became an obstacle to the reproduction and legitimation of the new economic and institutional order. Fifteen years of terror and free market exploitation are not an appropriate basis for winning plebiscites. And the

opposition political class, with a critical discourse, is capable of eliciting popular support and subordinating the mass of the population to a political pact with the power bloc—although this bloc itself is demanding stiff terms and setting very narrow margins for mainly legal-political reform.

The Reagan-Bush administration, a key player in the 'transition', has provided economic aid and military collaboration to strategic groups in the New Order, while taking its distance from the figure and regime of the General. The cohabitation of an elected government with a powerful presence of the armed forces would ensure Washington's essential economic and strategic interests, and Pinochet's acceptance of the plebiscite result confirms the thesis that his essential role in history was as a soldier of the marketplace not as a personal dictator. As Washington and Chilean elites sought to deflect and subordinate the massive popular mobilizations of 1983–86, the plebiscite emerged as the basic instrument for channelling discontent into an electoral framework controlled by the traditional political class and compatible with the overall system.

The New Economic Order (NEO), as the regime itself has dubbed it, has thus installed a new set of social actors, created a new axis for capital accumulation and imposed a new relationship between the state and the international marketplace.² Its basic mechanism has been a shift toward export of primary products (agriculture, forestry, fishing, minerals) and specialized manufactures. The state, through a series of measures, intervened on a massive scale to reverse the peasant-based agrarian reform programmes of the 1960s and 1970s and replaced them with a new set of agri-business enterprises linked to overseas markets.³ Business farmers now own and control the basic units of production: they exploit a small core of permanent labourers, as well as a much larger seasonal labour force. Under contract to local and foreign agricultural exporters, they invest heavily in pesticides, fertilizers and other modern inputs to increase the size and quality of their yields. In place of the traditional pattern of landlords and tenant farmers, today's agricultural class structure is characterized by a hierarchy of agri-business firms (suppliers and exporters), medium-sized capitalist farmers and a mass of super-exploited seasonal workers. The transformation of agriculture has produced a very uneven pattern of development: exports of certain fruit crops are expanding rapidly, while overall agricultural production has been stagnating. Expropriations have converted the peasantry into seasonal wage-workers and reduced their living standards, while concentrating income among business farmers and exporters.

The New Economic Order

In other sectors the New Economic Order has deepened and extended the

² There is a vast literature on the subject. For a summary discussion of the large-scale, long-term structural changes implanted by the Pinochet regime, see Alejandro Portes, *Latin American Exports in Neo-Conservative Economies*, Berkeley 1983, pp. 40–112, and Sergio Briner, *Chile: Liberalismo económico y dictadura política*, Lima 1980.

³ For a discussion of the regime's conception of the NEO, see James Petras, 'Pinochet's Strategy: Conducing the 21st Century', *Against the Current*, May–June 1988.

⁴ See José Bengoa, *El campesinado chileno después de la reforma agraria*, Santiago de Chile. The shifts in agriculture are quantified in Gonzalo Palabeta, 'El sistema de trabajo temporal', mimeo, n.d., 'Temporeros frutícolas', Centro el Canelo de Nos (1986), and Martha Cline, 'Los trabajadores temporeros en Chile. Selección de prensa Noviembre 1987–Febrero 1988', Santiago 1988.

patterns of uneven growth. In the regime's first decade, hypertrophy of finance, commerce and speculative activity was followed by the financial crash of 1981-82 and a period of massive state intervention in which much of the private debt was taken over;⁴ eventually private control was restored over finance, minus the presence of certain illicit actors. Manufacturing industry has undergone a general decline, accompanied by privatization, re-concentration and centralization of capital.⁵ However, 'deindustrialization' has not been a linear and constant process. On the contrary, certain industries have in recent years demonstrated a capacity to modernize and recover market shares. Thus, the performance of the NEO does not fit either the regime's image of a dynamic, expanding inclusive pattern of growth, or the picture painted by its critics of a stagnant, exclusive crisis-ridden system on the verge of collapse.⁶ What we have is a very contradictory process, highly susceptible to sharp cyclical variations with deeply polarized sectors and classes embedded in or excluded from the political-economic apparatus.

Pinochet's first success has been the dramatic shift in the relationship between public and private sector, achieved through massive transfers and sales of public enterprises. At the same time, industry has moved toward greater concentration and centralization, while the networks of distributors have polarized between, on the one hand, modern supermarkets and giant retail outlets and, on the other, an army of small vendors recruited from the mass of unemployed factory workers. In terms of both income and the social relations of production, the NEO has demolished all institutional and labour constraints on the authority of capital, atomizing the labour force and sharply limiting its capacity for organization.⁷ Pinochet has effected a vast 'income counter-revolution', sharply increasing profits at the expense of wages and salaries. Chile today has one of the lowest wage/value-added ratios in all of Latin America (17 per cent of the cost of a product is attributable to labour) and the highest rate of profit.⁸ In the countryside, the dominance of capitalist agriculture over the latifundia and cooperatives is based on the new chain of production and commercialization linking agri-business to the repressive apparatus of the state. The result is an unprecedented concentration of income in the hands of property-owners as against rural wage-labourers. This restructuring of the economy has been accompanied by a seemingly contradictory process whereby global decision-making, with all the means of allocative coercion, has been centralized in the state while the responsibility for the management of areas like health, education and local affairs has been decentralized to subordinate organs with scant resources.⁹ In the context of 'privatization', then, the scope of local authorities has been further restricted.

⁴ On the decline of industry see Barar, *op. cit.*, on the concentration of financial power see Gustavo Arce et al., *Concentración y poder económico en los sistemas financieros del cono sur*, PUEB Cono Sur No. 9, September 1987. On state intervention see Patricio Rozas and Gustavo Marín, *El endeudamiento bancario de los grupos económicos*, PUEB Cono Sur No. 2, February 1988.

⁵ *Aspectos generales del desarrollo reciente del capitalismo en Chile y su impacto sobre la clase obrera*, Santiago 1987.

⁶ An extreme version of this argument is found in Eugenio Tironi, *El liberalismo real*, Santiago 1987, esp. ch. 5, 'El fin del modelo'.

⁷ Manuel Barrera et al., *Trade Unions and the State in Present-Day Chile*, Santiago 1986.

⁸ On comparative profits see *Relatório Econômico*, Brazil, 14-20 December 1987, pp. 6 and 7, and *Sambor*, 3 March 1988, p. 41.

Powerful linkages to the international market were a major element in the restructuring of the Chilean economy, facilitating the large-scale financial flows and impelling the decision to privatize the public sector and to shift production from manufacturing for the local market toward agricultural and mineral specialization for the export market. Soaring debt payments and international competition subsequently imposed a long-term need to secure foreign currency and to finance the inputs to sustain export growth.¹⁰ The relative decline of the internal market, together with the exigencies of external competitiveness, have contributed to the income counter-revolution and the development of a seasonal or 'self-employed' labour force—labour without social overhead costs for capital. The concentration of political and economic power in the dictatorial state has allowed it to weather the abrupt cyclical downturns that have accompanied the process of internationalization and restructuring and the rather unfavourable overall economic performance.

The patterns of crisis and recovery are evident in the progression of industrial employment from 554,000 in 1972 (prior to Pinochet) to 450,000 in 1975, 567,000 in 1981 and 374,000 in 1982, with the latest recovery bringing it back to 575,000 in 1987.¹¹ With the highest per capita debt in Latin America, Chile's economy today depends more precariously than ever on outside funding and external markets—both of which in turn require wage levels to be kept below those of mining and agricultural competitors in the Third World.¹² The new social configuration which has taken shape in the Pinochet years links influential financial sectors, agri-business, medium-sized capitalist farmers and modernizing industrialists to overseas financial and multinational export sectors. This power bloc is backed by an army of civil and military functionaries dispensing regime patronage to marginal vulnerable groups.¹³

Pinochet's second major success has been in the realm of political discourse. He has not persuaded the opposition to accept his presidency until the end of the century—as he hoped to do with the plebiscite. But he has defined the economic and institutional framework and rules of the game within which the electoral process can and will take place. In present-day Chile no responsible electoral oppositionists speak of agrarian reform—'that is the dead language of the past', echoed one of the 'renovating socialists' who espouse the new realism.¹⁴ Today, among the electoral opposition, modernity and realism speak to the same technocratic, productivist discourse that is produced by Pinochet's economic advisers. The opposition shares with the regime the priority of promoting and maintaining 'efficient farmers', so long as they provide better housing and wages for their workers. Arguments for trade unions

¹⁰ On health programmes and the state see Rodrigo Contreras et al., *Salud pública, privados y subalternos en el Chile actual*, Santiago 1986.

¹¹ On the constraints of debt payments see Ricardo French-Davis, 'Los pagos de la deuda externa en el modelo neoliberal', *Política y Economía* No. 372, January–February 1988.

¹² See *Apuntes generales*, op cit, p. 21.

¹³ Marin and Rozas, *Los grupos transnacionales y la crisis el caso chileno*, Buenos Aires 1988.

¹⁴ According to one researcher in the *publicaciones*, as many as two million Chileans receive some kind of subsidy. The percentage of income deriving from state subsidy is often as high as 70 per cent. Interview with Carlos Montecinos, 11 March 1988.

¹⁵ For a critical view of the 'new realism', see Petras, 'Transición, política electoral y redefiniciones políticas', *Asílo* No. 5, Santiago 1988.

follow a similar line of reasoning: capitalist farmers are advised to accept 'pragmatic unionists' in order to avoid radical organizers who might disrupt production and export sales.

Thus, within the logic of the new pattern of accumulation, the opposition argues that its greater capacity to govern is more likely to avoid conflict and to improve crisis-management, and that social change and reforms will help to consolidate the new pattern of export growth. Political legitimacy and a better international image are themselves presented as a superior technique for extending access to markets, credits and economic aid. As events surrounding the plebiscite showed, the eschewal of mass confrontation within the narrow constraints of the 1980 constitution has brought the vast majority of the political class to terms with Pinochet's new economic order. In order to challenge the regime effectively, the opposition would have to confront the NEO itself and the broad array of social classes entrenched behind it. But not only do some of these classes form the natural constituency of the political opposition; they also control foreign exchange earnings and influence foreign financial transactions which could impinge on its economic strategy.

The strength of the Pinochet regime does not rest solely on its control over the apparatus of repression, or access to overseas financial support (as important as these may be)—otherwise, it would not be willing to test its strength in an electoral contest. Nor does it rest upon any exceptional economic performance. Rather, the regime's key support is the alignment of social forces resulting from the transformation of the economy and the new internal class linkages that accompany it—an alignment which would, of course, be endangered by a resurgence of popular power. The second source of Pinochet's strength lies in the conversion of the intellectual class from a critical revolutionary stratum into an institutionalized adaptive force operating 'inside the whale' of the New Order. The goals and structures of the Pinochet counter-revolution have redefined the electoral debate: agrarian reform has been replaced by incomes policies; nationalization or socialization of production by debt management; socialism by liberal democracy. Nevertheless, the economic restructuring, the social dislocations and the roller-coaster of crisis and recovery have created three dynamic social layers from which a challenge could be mounted to Pinochet and the NEO: (a) the growing mass of farm-workers; (b) the urban social movements based in the *poblaciones*; and (c) the trade unions. Let us look at each of these in turn.

The New Working Class: Agro-Labour

The restructuring of capital and the shift to international markets have meant the restructuring of the working class, not its destruction.¹⁵ The NEO has increased the size of the working class—both its active 'employed' sector and its passive reserve army of unemployed. More important, the new pattern of accumulation has vastly expanded that sector of the working class which alternates between activity and passivity, the seasonal workers. The central issue for new export-oriented

¹⁵ The thesis on the 'decline of the working class' is argued in detail in Javier Martínez and Arturo León, *Clases y clasificaciones sociales*, Santiago 1987.

agri-capitalism is 'labour flexibility': the capacity for capital to recruit and dismiss labour according to seasonal and export-market needs. Conversely, the central issue for labour is the insecurity of employment and the disjuncture between working time (period of waged employment) and 'living time' (the whole year). In this context radical organizers have political opportunities.

As land cultivated for export crops has doubled, and in some cases tripled, the increasing absorption of seasonal labour at below-subsistence wages has carried the agricultural labour force in less than a decade from tens of thousands to half-a-million wage workers.¹⁶ The cash nexus is the only bond between agri-capitalists and these seasonal workers, most of whom are recruited from rural *poblaciones* or nearby urban slum areas in the four months between January and April. The principal sources of this recruitment are: former peasants displaced by Pinochet's counter-reform; land-reform beneficiaries who have lost their land as a result of debt; unemployed young people, women heads of households, and displaced male factory workers in the cities. The social relations of production are a throwback to the turn of the century: piecework wages range from \$1.50 to \$5.00, in a day that stretches from before dawn to nightfall. There is no housing, so workers either improvise in the countryside or commute back to slum dwellings. There are no medical services, insecticide poisoning is a frequent occurrence, and in some areas 'punishment centres' are in operation for labour indiscipline.

To maintain their absolute authority and high rates of profit while expanding export production, the capitalist farmers count on the state and private repressive forces, as well as the existence of a large pool of surplus labour. Moreover, the dictatorship has been very generous in providing incentives, financial aid and infrastructural investment to promote the activity of the agri-exporters, who in turn are among the strongest political supporters of the regime. As always, the very success of this strategy has led to the expansion of a potentially threatening wage-labour force: apart from the hundreds of thousands of fruit-pickers, tens of thousands of fruit packers, shippers, transport and dock workers have been drawn into the cash nexus.

Expansion of the working class, together with a highly integrated transport and production network, have created the basis for new working-class organization and politics. But unemployment and employer-backed repression, involving the massive firing of strikers and the black-listing of militants, have made the organization of productive workers very difficult¹⁷—further problems being the diverse sources of recruitment, the use of contract-labour and dispersal of workers across the property boundaries of a large number of medium-sized farms. The leading parties and personalities of the opposition, particularly those who have put most of their effort into an appeal to middle-class voters, can hardly be expected to provide more than minimal assistance to the unionization of workers in a strategic economic sector, with all that that implies for a confrontational kind of politics.

¹⁶ Cline, op. cit. The following section draws on a workshop on seasonal workers held at Pueri with several farm-worker organizers, 8 March 1988.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Contrary to the view of some writers, the restructuring of the economy has led not to a diminution of the working class but to its restructuring.¹⁸ Moreover, despite the formidable obstacles, it is likely that several factors will converge to detonate working-class organization. First, tendencies to fragmentation are partly offset by the relatively homogeneous sites of residence from which many farm workers are recruited, while unionization prior to recruitment at the place of residence can facilitate organization at the site of production. Secondly, the highly interdependent nature of agricultural production and distribution provides numerous points at which limited labour action at peak moments can have maximum results. Thirdly, crop specialization and concentration in specific geographic regions lends itself to concentration and homogenization in strategic 'poles of organization',¹⁹ which can have a multiplier effect on adjoining areas. All these counter-tendencies go against the social-contract electoral politics of opposition politicians and intellectuals, whose imagery of a reformist middle class, a defused and declining working class and a socially marginal underclass serves to legitimate their pursuit of all-inclusive political coalitions that cut across the labour-capital divide. In contrast, the agri-capitalists themselves take the existing class divisions as the point of departure for their political definitions—clearly opting for the regime that sustains the political immobility of their labour force. Attempts by the political opposition to secure electoral agreements at the top undermine their only real option which is organization at the bottom. However, by shunning horizontal class conflicts in favour of vertical elite conflicts, the political and intellectual class does assure its political terrain: the opposition press, research centres and electoral activity are able to operate without severe hardship. In summary, then, the rapid expansion of the agri-business sector has created the preconditions of a new dynamic pole of working-class politics—one which could, by virtue of its size and strategic importance, challenge the regime. The major contradiction in Chile today is between these growing objective opportunities and the subjective political-organizational weaknesses.

The growth of the rural working class is directly linked to the growth of a surplus urban labour force, and the mobilization of new urban movements can have direct effects on the organizational propensities of the seasonal workers, particularly among those young workers and women who have had direct contact with neighbourhood organizers. Moreover, previous organizational experience among displaced peasants and former land-reform beneficiaries, together with the example set by packing and transport workers, could provide a matrix for the renewal of union organization among proletarianized seasonal workers. The key notion is that organic ties among different working-class segments provide the basis for class organization and solidarity leading to effective political action.²⁰ A view of the whole circuit of production, rather than the fragmentary

¹⁸ Maruñez and León, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ See Palabella, *op. cit.*, and 'Tempereros frumcolas', *op. cit.*

²⁰ During a visit to the población, Nueva Amanecer, we discovered a concrete example of this kind of horizontal solidarity. A strike in a nearby farm was in the process of being broken by the farm-owner. Several women from Nueva Amanecer, leaders in the common kitchen movement, heard of the strike-breaking and organized a road blockade to prevent trucks from moving the fruit. The owner, fearing the loss of his market, came to an agreement with the farm-workers' union. While this experience of urban movement-farmworker solidarity may not be common, it does exemplify the possibility of coalition-building based on common interests. Interviews, 7 March 1988, Ofra Comm. Zona Oriente.

vision resulting from sectoral analysis, will bring out the increasingly interdependent nature of the rural working class.

Urban Social Movements

The Chilean urban social movements have emerged from, and are largely organized through, the sections of the shanty-town dwellers. They include a broad array of organizations: (a) associations for subsistence, such as soup kitchens and urban family gardens; (b) demand-oriented associations addressing housing issues and utility bills; (c) local coordinating bodies grouping all community organizations at the local and district level; and (d) organizations for national social and political representation, such as the United Slumdwellers Committee (Comité Unitario de Pobladores, CUP). Of the two million slum-dwellers in Santiago, 220,000 belong to the grassroots organizations. Despite the repression, the community organizations have experienced rapid growth from 494 in 1983 to 1,200 in 1985 and, independently of their original intentions, have rapidly acquired a political character from the act of looking for collective solutions.

The breadth and scope of the *pobladores* organizations emerge from a simple listing of the actions in which they have been involved since 1980: development of community-subsistence and other independent organizations; presentation of demands to the authorities; utility payment strikes and illegal electricity hook-ups; land seizures for housing; raids on supermarkets and warehouses; raids on passing trucks and trains; 'workplace' organizing on the part of street vendors and occasional workers; demonstrations and street actions, including the erection of barricades and prolonged street-fighting; destruction of government-related offices and symbols in shanty-town neighbourhoods; and self-defence actions.

The collective practices carried out by the urban poor reflect the arduous process by which the dispossessed constitute themselves as social actors, rather than a process of social disorganization or dissolution, as some writers have assumed. Chile's social movements are, in fact, a new form of working-class politics, combining struggles for changes in the general conditions of reproduction with demands for insertion in the productive process.²¹ It is a fundamental conceptual flaw to counterpose 'movements' to 'class'—without examining the class composition of the movements, the context from which the principal actors emerge (declining industry) and the future perspective to which they aspire (reinsertion in stable wage labour). To fix on the dispersed, unemployed or self-employed individuals at any moment in time is to construct a theory on a conjunctural classification of 'class'. Only a narrowly empiricist style of research can transform the seasonal or reserve army of labour into a distinct and separate category from the working class.²² For the process of capitalist production and reproduction depends upon the ejection and incorporation of labour at different points in its cycle, and even large-scale or extended exclusion from production does not create a qualitatively different set of social interests. Capitalist exploitation is experienced not only

²¹ For a more detailed discussion, see James Petras and Fernando Lerra, 'Chile's Poor in the Struggle for Democracy', *Latin American Perspectives* 12(4), Fall 1986.

²² Martínez and León, op. cit.

directly by workers employed in production but also by unemployed workers through their role as downward pressure on wages, or through their cyclical incorporation in seasonal work. Ex-factory-workers who become self-employed and join the neighbourhood organizations, perhaps working as seasonal wage labourers and usually aspiring to waged employment, do not cease to be part of the working class. The mobilizations, barricades and street-fighting in the *poblaciones* reflect labour's adaptation of class struggle under conditions of severe state repression and absolute employer control at the workplace. The displacement of workers from the active to the passive labour force; and the growth of struggles at the point of residence rather than production, reflect adaptations by different components of the working class to the restructuring and cyclical nature of capital. The greater, not lesser, degree of proletarianization is evident not only in the countryside but also in the city, through the large-scale incorporation of women in the wage-labour force, the growing dropout rate and involvement in seasonal wage labour among schoolchildren, and the increasing impoverishment (decline of wages and loss of status) of public sector service workers.

The tendency of some social scientists to view the process of class formation through an approach that emphasizes (and magnifies) occupational and sectoral divisions is likely to understate the significant growth of the working class and to mis-read the axis of collective action. This, as we have seen, is a chronic problem with the multi-class electoral appeals of the opposition politicians and parties. Indeed, there is a striking disaffection with their role among the neighbourhood organizations. The struggle of the urban working-class social movements for socio-economic change finds expression in the struggle for autonomy—which implies rejection of the traditional political hierarchy of the Chilean opposition, the Party at the top, civic and trade union organizations next and *población* movements at the bottom. As one leader of the CUP put it to me: 'The *pobladores* reject political parties for their failure to represent our interests. Their tendency to compete atomizes our organizations. The party representatives in the *población* organizations are under cross pressures—from the top to follow party directives [to support electoral demands] and from the rank and file for immediate social demands.'²³

The different perceptions are evident in the assessment of the decline in mass demonstrations in central Santiago since 1986. Whereas, for the professional politicians, this signalled the retreat and defeat of the social movements, the view from the bottom was one of increasing local demonstrations, organization and municipal power within the working-class *poblaciones*.²⁴ While the professionals were focusing their minds on the plebiscite, the working-class *pobladores* were electing their own representatives to local councils, defeating incumbent Pinochetist candidates in almost half of Santiago's working-class neighbourhoods. One *poblador* leader summed up his recent experience: 'Between 1983 and 1986 there were national mobilizations. During 1983 there was organization and consolidation: a decline of national mobilization and an extension of work in the neighbourhoods. There is severe repression in the neighbourhoods—over

²³ Interview, René Tapia, 4 March 1988

²⁴ Interviews with Carlos Mouton, op cit., and CUP leader Mario Borgosa, 11 March 1988

two hundred and fifty "self-exiles" per month in 1987. Over eighty per cent were activists and leaders in the neighbourhoods. There is a very high turnover. We have to counteract the national repression—to create sectoral opposition. Of the twenty-four municipalities in Santiago, twelve are with the CUP. The movements were not defeated or dismantled, but shifted from national to local organization. For the whisky-left, politics over a glass, we don't exist. We are "obsolete", which is to say people are obsolete. Our social mobilization in the neighbourhoods is not sensational—we had seventy-eight actions on 8 March 1988, none of which was reported, not even in the opposition press. Ideologues and journalists look at political not social facts. Of the eight hundred people killed in the national protests, five hundred came from the *poblaciones*. The logic of the parties is in conflict with the CUP.²⁵

In some areas, the dynamic of the current social movements approximates to that of the late 1960s or early 1970s. It is true that in the movement to seize housing sites, for example, there were only thirty takeovers between 1980 and 1985, compared with 311 between 1969 and 1971. However, the number of participants is almost equal: 54,710 in 1969–71, and 51,447 in 1980–85. The greater concentration of homeless people in fewer actions reflects the need for a larger critical mass to resist the more severe repression unleashed by the Pinochet dictatorship. The growth of the urban shanty-town movement also expresses the entry of new social forces into the struggle against the dictatorship and its neo-liberal economic policies. Thus forty per cent of delegates to the First Metropolitan Congress of Slumdwellers held in April 1986 were women and seventy-two per cent were under the age of thirty.

It seems clear that the massive presence of the urban movements in the national protests was instrumental in Pinochet's shift towards electoral concessions. In drawing the party elites into electoral competition, he counted on their influence to demobilize the social movements, on the repressive apparatuses to neutralize 'uncontrollable' activists, and on large-scale state investments in housing, infrastructure and employment to contain the dynamic struggles of the urban movements.²⁶ Nevertheless, the movements continue their upward trajectory, extending their social networks in civil society, and their relationship with political parties continues to be ambiguous and conflictual. As the Right itself, through extensive subsidies, builds a rival local network among those classes living in extreme poverty, the social movements face two diametrically opposed options: either they can become the subordinate clients of the party elites within an essentially liberal electoral system; or they could develop their dynamic democratic practices, inherent in their local communities, and displace professional-intellectual tutelage in favour of a new type of popular democracy.

Trade Unions: The Reconstruction of a Social Movement

In conversation with a coalminers' leader earlier this year, I asked how it

²⁵ Interview with Borgosa, op. cit.

²⁶ Pinochet's 'National Civic Crusade' and his 'Plan Civico' are two expressions of his effort to win the plebsuete so as to create a long-term base for the regime. Interview with Moores, op. cit. For a more detailed discussion of regime strategy among the urban poor, see Guillermo Campora, *Entre la sobrevivencia y la acción política*, Santiago 1987. The best single publication on the *poblacionero* movement is *Hacia Urbanos*, published monthly by Sur Documentación.

was possible that a union with fifty years of Marxist leadership could come under the influence of right-wing or even Centrist leaders. His explanation was direct and to the point—'the massive firing of over two thousand working-class militants, rank-and-file leaders throughout the industry and their replacement by a-political peasant lads with no union experience under the leadership of right-wing military patrons.'²⁷ In March 1988 the visible signs of a slow but steady reconstruction of the coal-workers' union was evident. Despite heavy regime funding, the pro-Pinochet slate was defeated and four of the six delegates were from the Left.

More generally, however, the trade union movement has been weakened by massive purges, state intervention, legal restrictions on union activity and large-scale restructuring of capital forcing many workers out of industrial production. Particularly hard-hit were the militant industrial organizations that were at the forefront of the social struggles during the Allende government. By one estimate, the employed industrial working class has been reduced by more than a half: in 1971 it numbered 620,900, in 1982 the figure was 275,000.²⁸ In the meantime unemployed workers increased from 91,800 in 1971 to 968,900 in 1982 (including in public works).²⁹ Thus the decade after the Pinochet coup saw a shift in the internal composition of the working classes from active industrial to 'passive' unemployed workers. With the economic recovery of the mid-1980s there appears to be a reversal of this trend, as the number of active workers in production has increased by 19 per cent from 1,609,000 in 1981 to 1,918,000 in 1987.³⁰ It may still be true that industrial workers have declined significantly as a proportion of the economically active population (from 23 per cent in 1972 to 17 per cent in 1982, according to Lagos and Tokman³¹). But it does not necessarily follow that there has been a decline in the qualitative importance of the working class. On the contrary, this would appear to have significantly increased with the growth of large-scale capital imports during the 1980s, the industrial recovery and the growth of exports. In the first quarter of 1988 the trade surplus tripled over the previous year to reach \$593.7 mn. Exports were up 49 per cent—including a 46.1 per cent growth in manufacturing exports, which contributed one third of the total.³²

The decline in unemployment has been accompanied by a revival of trade union activity and an increase in wage demands. Moreover, the results of recent union elections have favoured the opposition, and a powerful movement to forge a new, unified labour confederation is underway. The growth of working-class pressure was evident in Pinochet's announcement on 1 May 1988 of a 24 per cent increase in the minimum wage, a 25 per cent increase in the family subsidy for lower income groups, and rises of 10–13 per cent in public sector pay. Real wages are predicted to rise by five per cent for the year—although this would still leave the minimum wage twenty per cent lower than in 1981, the year before the crisis and cyclical downturn in the economy.³³

²⁷ Interview with Mouses Labrains, President of the Mining Confederation, 4 March 1988

²⁸ Martínez and León, *op. cit.*, p. 88

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Aspectos generales*, p. 13

³¹ Ricardo Lagos and Victor Tokman, *Monetarismo global, empleo y estratificación social*, Santiago 1982

³² *Latin American Weekly Report*, 19 May 1988, p. 2

³³ *Ibid.*

The recovery and growth of Chilean capitalism occurs precisely out of the crisis, which was accompanied by a shakedown of industry and readjustments between industry and finance. It is precisely a misunderstanding of the role of crisis that leads many critics to view it as a terminal process or distortion rather than as a necessary ingredient of capitalist reproduction. Just as, during the previous conjuncture, some reformist theorists predicted permanent stagnation and ungovernability, today they argue that there is a need to adapt and preserve the dynamic aspects of the current accumulation pattern, while reforming its authoritarian aspects. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the 'decline of the working class' thesis became the basis from which electoralist ideologues called for alliances with the elite to manage the crisis; today the growth of the economy becomes the basis for their call for cross-class transactions and all-inclusive political coalitions to elect a civilian regime. It is, therefore, not the 'decline of the working class' that is the heart of reformist politics but a willingness to collaborate with the new power centres.

Political strategists who fail to come to grips with the recomposition and resurgence of the working class are largely functioning within the narrow realm of the political class, in which individual vote-counts, realignments in the military high command and the multiplication of party-elite coalitions count more than the social recomposition of civil society, the reconstruction of the workers' movements and the unification of the trade unions. Presently, a major obstacle blocking a qualitative increase in working class and trade union power—apart from state repression—is precisely the tendency of the electoral party professionals to intervene, compete, divide and subordinate 'their' trade union representatives to the electoral strategies. The political factor—not structural heterogeneity within the working class—artificially exacerbates the latent political differences and erodes overt social solidarity between diverse sectors of the working class. The homogeneity of working-class conditions—declining salaries, official incomes policy, arbitrary power of the employers, opposition to state control of unions, and the common pursuit of collective organization—more than compensate for differences in skill, income and sector. The basis for class politics in Chile is stronger than at any time in recent years. Social space is opening up for a union resurgence, and the economic expansion is creating appropriate terrain for collective bargaining. Rank-and-file worker consciousness is more disposed than ever to support a unitary labour movement. Moreover, these developments occur at a moment when the regime itself is increasingly dependent on industrial exports to sustain the balance of payments. In a word, the objective conditions are present for working-class insurgency—and particularly for the reconstruction of labour organizations if they are capable of establishing their autonomy of class action, and distancing themselves from the liberal electoral manipulation of the professional political class.

The most recent and significant addition to the working-class movement in Chile has come through the increasing pauperization and proletarianization of public service workers. For many social scientists, the waged and salaried workers in health, teaching or transport, etc. are and always have been 'middle class'. But whatever their status and consumption aspirations, past or present, the brunt of the cost of privatization and a market-oriented economy has fallen on the shoulders of public sector

employees and professionals. Downwardly mobile, with declining incomes and job security, they increasingly resemble the industrial working class in living standards, working conditions and their propensity for collective action. Class politics—in the sense of the struggle between wage and property groups—has found new historic allies within the low-paid health and educational workers. It makes less and less sense, conceptually or practically, to separate 'public' from 'private' wage-workers, 'productive' from 'service' workers—particularly in a period when the market, capital and the state have drawn the class boundaries and benefits in such distinct and exclusive fashion. The privileged position of export-oriented private enterprise as the centrepiece of economic growth means that the current crisis among public workers and salaried professionals is not a temporary phenomenon but part of a long-term, large-scale erosion of income and status. 'Proletarianization' of public sector workers creates discontent and organization. The prospects for sustained struggles within the public sector will accentuate before and during the lifting of the heavy hand of state repression and a rearticulation of the trade union movement. Throughout Latin America, the free market export strategy and the sharp fiscal cutbacks have forced massive and sustained protests among public sector workers—recent examples being the teachers' strikes in Argentina and Brazil in 1988. The loosening of political controls is likely to provoke a similar response in Chile.

The rearticulation of the trade union movement has, however, been severely constrained by the deep structural dependence of Chilean research institutes and trade unions upon European, US and Canadian foundations, corporations and trade union bureaucracies, each with their closely monitored political agenda. Within the Chilean trade unions, the American Institute for Free Labor Development and the ICFTU, among others, have provided the salaries that sustain leaders in a style unheard-of before the dictatorship. The principal beneficiaries—Christian Democrats and Socialist 'Renovators'—have as a consequence been driven to pursue policies that minimize or marginalize the Communist Party, thus severely dividing the labour movement and reducing its effectiveness. More significantly, external funding has created a stratum of well-paid functionaries who shape their union struggles within the political framework of their party leaders and external patrons. As a result, the opportunities for organizing new unions, or for expanding the collective bargaining capacity of existing unions, pass through an intricate web of political coalitions and competing union structures that fragment labour action. Union cohesion and class solidarity are inversely related to the vertical ties of the leadership stratum to international financial backers: the stronger the latter, the weaker the former (and vice versa).

Communism under the Dictatorship

Before the dictatorship the Communist Party of Chile, which had a long tradition of participating in political and social struggles, was easily the most influential force within the trade union movement, with deep roots in working-class communities and an electoral strength between 15 and 20 per cent. However, it was also deeply committed to the norms and procedures of capitalist democracy and to a broad alliance policy geared especially to 'progressive' sectors of Christian Democracy—so much so

that it was ideologically and organizationally ill-equipped to confront the bloody military coup and its aftermath. In the first phase after the coup, between 1973 and 1980, thousands of Communist leaders and activists were killed, jailed or exiled—and many more were fired from their jobs. The internal composition and political direction of the Party then began to change as a new generation of middle-level leaders developed out of street-fighting and underground struggle. Between 1976 and 1980 an intense debate developed between the Old Guard, which still thought in terms of an exclusively political struggle and alliances with the Centre-Right, and the new militants who argued for a political-military strategy that combined guerrilla actions, mass mobilization and an alliance of the Left. In 1980 the position of these militants became Party policy, and a self-criticism of the conciliatory attitude toward the military and the Christian Democrats was officially accepted.

A sector of the left wing of the Communist Party now joined with the revolutionary-socialist MIR to form the guerrilla organization, the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (MRPF), while others turned to organizing and mobilizing in the shanty-towns. The MRPF never became a major challenge to the Pinochet regime, but it did enjoy the sympathy, if not support, of a large number of young, unemployed slum-dwellers. In 1983, when the first mass urban demonstrations began, the Front carried out parallel activities but was never able to integrate the military and social struggles into a coherent movement. Throughout the period from 1983 to 1986 the CP retained its dual character as a party with a strong, professional, electorally oriented political leadership and middle-level and rank-and-file militants tied to urban mass insurgency. The turning point came in September 1986 when the MRPF failed in its attempt to assassinate Pinochet. The Centre-Right opposition coalition, frightened by the mass radicalization, shifted its policies towards the electoral arena and broke all ties with the Communist Party in the mass organizations. The divisions among the opposition, as well as Pinochet's frequent military occupation of the shanty towns, led to a decline in city-centre mass protests. The reformist wing of the Communist Party now reasserted a broad alliance politics, abandoning guerrilla struggle and stepping up its efforts to regain trade union leadership.

The new phase has been consolidated since the Communist Party announced in June 1988 that it would participate on the 'no' side in the plebiscite, despite the authoritarian and restrictive Constitution under which it was to be organized. The language of class politics, multifaceted struggle and political rupture was retained in the Party's declaration,³⁴ but it is clear that the traditional leadership has once again taken control and direction of tactics and strategy. Nevertheless, the demands of the popular organizations, led by the Communist militants, continue to shape and influence the behaviour of the Party. Whereas the rest of the opposition has focused almost exclusively on political and legal reforms, the campaign of the Communists has placed much greater emphasis on social and economic issues.

Conclusion

The October plebiscite, though registering a majority in favour of

³⁴ See *Andrés Bello*, 20–26 June 1988, pp. 20–21.

Pinochet's withdrawal from the presidency, has not in itself threatened the basic military and economic institutions, patterns of accumulation and class structures that have been established in fifteen years of dictatorship. A recent poll on economic policy, conducted in February 1988 by the right-wing Export Manufacturers Association (ASEXMA), found 'many points of coincidence among antagonistic currents' from the Right to the Centre-Left, and Roberto Fantuzzi, a leader of ASEXMA, concluded that the survey results 'will help calm the anxieties of businessmen'.³⁵ Pinochet himself has announced that regular presidential elections, under his own Constitution with all its restrictive clauses on opposition parties and organizations, will not in any case be held until the end of 1989. And even then the military high command will retain control of its own institution, as well as a dominant position in the National Security Council with a veto on any legislation that they deem incompatible with national security. Moreover, within the civilian opposition, former collaborators and supporters of the military regime are becoming increasingly numerous, and those who favour the present socio-economic model can be expected to take the lead in formulating economic policy. The coalition-building strategy which has 'reached out to the Right' is a copy of the Brazilian experience, where the results have included a profoundly regressive economic and social policy, immunity of military officials, loss of political legitimacy by the civilian Sarney regime, the rise of crime, growing state repression (three hundred peasants killed in 1987) and four-digit inflation.³⁶ Recent political transitions in Latin America have generally issued in a dual society in which a highly mobile and vocal professional political class shares power with the military, and faces increasingly immobile, unrepresented and atomized working and salaried classes.

It is precisely because such a political outcome is possible, or even probable, within the context of present trends in Chile that it is necessary to identify the opportunities and possibilities that exist for an alternative transition. The potential exists today for a new working-class coalition, one that includes the wage-based agricultural workers, the dynamic urban social movements and the trade unions of industrial and public sector workers. The political-economic strategy of the existing state and its class allies is diametrically opposed to this new working-class majority. If one views politics from the bottom up, there are few opportunities indeed for political transactions with the existing socio-economic order; a transition based on the interests of the subordinate classes implies a rupture with past and present collaborators of the regime. A transition through elite transactions, on the other hand, would be one that accommodates existing power configurations and includes a future of political and economic continuity at the top and at the bottom. From the popular assemblies in the *poblaciones* and the trade unions, an alternative form of democracy is struggling to establish its proper class identity. If and when it emerges, it will present a challenge not only to the military regime but also to the professional political class which purports to speak in its name.

³⁵ *Latin American Weekly Report*, 19 May 1988, p. 3.

³⁶ Marcos Artuda, *Procesos Acorramados os Os Grandes Grupos Economicos. o Estruturamento Externo e o Emprego em Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 1988.

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Andrew Kopkind

The Jackson Moment

Jesse Jackson woke up on November ninth to find himself the leader of the largest and most powerful political party in the Western capitalist world, and the front-runner for its Presidential nomination in 1992. It is an unwonted and unexpected role. The black Baptist preacher and Chicago community activist has never held public office. In his two contests for the nomination he was supported by just one white statewide elected official in the country (Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower, a populist maverick) and endorsed by only a couple of general-readership newspapers out of thousands. He was cut off without a penny by most of the Party's customary contributors, he was rebuked or ignored by much of its white establishment and even at the grass roots he consistently gathered higher 'negatives' than any other candidate in the numerous public opinion polls. And yet Jackson not only survived the Democratic debacle of 1988 but seems the stronger for it.

For five years Jackson had argued, by word and example, that a candidate of the Centre in the Democratic Party could no longer expect to win national elections, and certainly not hope to organize a successful national administration if he did manage to squeak into office on a fluke, as Jimmy Carter had done after Watergate and Vietnam. Radical transformations in American society over the past quarter-century—the era of Republican national electoral triumph—have eliminated the 'natural' majority the Democrats enjoyed during the New Deal and its aftermath. Specifically, the experience of racial insurgency, imperial defeat and deindustrialization (or post-industrialization) detached the constituencies of white Southerners and northern blue-collar workers from the coalition that existed at the foundation of the historic Democratic majority. Racial conflict and economic change led to the rapid and drastic suburbanization of the population. Democratic political machines in the cities and labour union organizations in the shops rusted along with the infrastructure. Blacks, Hispanics and recently-arrived ethnics, as well as working-class women, lesbians and gays, and a growing but unselfconscious white underclass were isolated, marginalized and excluded from political attention by the Democrats for fear of alarming the new white suburbanites with talk of expensive welfare programmes, mandatory integration in housing and education, and cultural liberalization.

The Break-Up of the Democratic Coalition

In fact, the trend was discernible as early as 1948, when the white 'Dixiecrats', led by South Carolina's Democratic Senator Strom Thurmond,

bolted from the party over a mildly liberal civil rights platform pushed by Harry Truman. Although Truman won the Presidency that year, the white Southerners never really reaffirmed their loyalty to the Party, although some later voted for Southerner Jimmy Carter for reasons of regional pride. In the 1950s, both parties facilitated the process of suburbanization by such diverse means as the Defense Highway Act and the Defense Education Act—both of them using a Cold War, anti-communist rationale for channeling federal funds to white suburban development. In a sense, tax dollars paid for the transformation of urban Democrats into suburban Republicans, for the migrants to the new suburbia soon started voting for the GOP. The aggressive civil rights movement of the early 1960s, eagerly exploited by northern white liberal Democratic politicians as a way to drive the entrenched Southern Democrats out of positions of power in Congress and the party hierarchy, served in quite a contradictory way to remove the white Southern sector of the electorate—and much of the Northern white ethnic sector—from the Democratic coalition. For a time, those essentially racist elements united in a fractional third party under former Alabama Governor George Wallace, but ultimately they came to rest in the Republican nest under such names as the 'Silent Majority' of the Nixon years and the 'Reagan Democrats' of recent memory.

The extensive demographic migration got a big boost in 1972, when all those whose identity (not to mention their economic security) was heavily invested in imperial success refused George McGovern's invitation to celebrate America's defeat in Vietnam. Jimmy Carter's apparent failure to vanquish the hated Ayatollah Khomeini confirmed the worst fears of the imperial nostalgics, who can now be counted securely in Republican ranks. Furthermore, although the 'children of the sixties' were somewhat cautiously embraced by the Democrats in McGovern's day, during the 1980s the Party actually tried to break up internal caucuses of such post-sixties groups as feminists and gays, so that the old guard could rule without factional hindrance. Shut out of the party structures, the descendants of the sixties movements largely forgot about electoral politics—until the Jackson moment arrived.

The realignment of available, organized constituencies within the two major parties had again given the Republicans the White House, but that party remains a minority force in the country at large and in its electoral institutions. In raw numbers, there are more registered Democrats and many more unregistered Democrats than there are Republicans, and governing bodies from both houses of Congress down through state assemblies and city councils are heavily Democratic. But there are several factors which seem to prohibit Democrats from utilizing the majority they could command. In particular, national Democrats have refused to campaign on class and race issues, and at the same time they have rejected proposals which would widen the electoral pool and bring millions from the racial minorities, the white poor and other disenfranchised constituencies into the political process—and the voting booths.

The act of voting is increasingly unpopular in America, despite the hoopla, but it was not ever thus. Voter turnout in nineteenth-century America was more than respectable; a hundred years ago, for instance, 86

per cent of the eligible electorate outside the South (and 81 per cent overall) voted for president. About that time, however, the political parties concluded that the citizenry could be better controlled and manipulated by restricting the voting rolls rather than expanding them. Virtually every state legislature erected imposing barriers to voting including registration laws which effectively kept black, ethnic European and working-class participation to a minimum. It is not easy to vote in most American locales. People have to register long before election day, and often have to re-register if they move or if they fail to vote in one or more elections. Where the authorities would rather that the multitudes do not vote, registration days are few and far between, registration hours are short or restricted to the workday, and registration locations are difficult to find or poorly advertised. Those who have not grown up in the middle-class political culture (that is to say, millions of recent immigrants, rural blacks, urban Hispanics, and others in the growing underclass) find the whole process confusing—and usually not worth the trouble. Moreover, the lack of 'ideological' parties which clearly express class and racial interests leads many people to the quite understandable conclusion that voting is of absolutely no importance to their lives. Those who make the voting rules are happy with that state of affairs. As Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward write in their recent study of voting patterns, 'the demobilization of lower-strata voters occurred at precisely that time in our history when the possibilities of electoral politics had begun to enlarge. Indeed . . . it occurred because the possibilities of popular influence through electoral politics were expanding.' In other words, as opportunities opened for blacks and workers (and later, women) to make demands on the political structure, and as government began to intervene seriously in economic and social affairs, those most in need of the vote were denied access to it.

Despite occasional resurgences of voter participation in times of heated social movement (such as Jackson's registration drive in the South in 1984 or the efforts of the Christian Right in 1980 and 1984), no permanent remobilization of the 'lower strata' has occurred. The higher strata, however, are pleased to go to the polls in measures comparable with other countries in America's political and economic league. Almost 80 per cent of college graduates regularly vote—twice as many as those with only a grade-school education. More than three-quarters of the people with incomes above \$50,000 a year vote—again, twice as many as those who earn less than \$50,000. Class consciousness is not a subject studied in much depth in American universities, but a few comparative surveys of voting behaviour indicate that the half of the electorate that does not vote here is roughly comparable in attitude to the supporters of the Labour Party in England and other Euroleft parties on the Continent. If that's the case, any significant expansion of the participating electorate would move the entire political system to the left and realign the parties. Since only about half of the eligible population now votes in quadrennial presidential elections (and the figure is much, much lower for less important contests), it is no longer meaningful to describe the American political mood or political opinion in terms of the election returns. When the media spout clichés such as 'America gave George Bush a mandate for the

¹ *Why Americans Don't Vote*, New York 1988.

continuation of conservative policies', it can only mean that a plurality of rather well-to-do, middle-aged or elderly educated white voters—representing about a quarter of the potential electorate—voted for George Bush. (In fact, deeper analyses of American political consciousness, in particular Tom Ferguson and Joel Rogers' landmark study, *Right Turn*, showed that there was no consensus in the country for Ronald Reagan's right-wing policies, as opposed to his presidential personality.) Referring to the plurality in an American presidential election as 'America' is a little like calling the white voters for P.W. Botha's Nationalist Party, 'South Africa'.

The Funding Priorities

What limited expansion of the Democratic Party that has occurred in the Jackson direction has caused anxiety in the ranks of political cliques in power from Manhattan to Mississippi. Expansion is a form of empowerment which allows members of the enlarged electorate to participate in the political dynamic beyond single issues of self-interest. Although Governor Michael Dukakis promised last summer to give Jackson the wherewithal to run a vast voter-registration drive, in fact very few resources (in money and personnel) were ever forthcoming and in most areas Democratic registration actually decreased between 1984 and 1988.

Dukakis's fund-raisers, led by the effective Boston lawyer Robert Farmer, filled a campaign war chest with almost \$30 million before Dukakis even went to be nominated at the national convention in Atlanta. It was the most money, by far, that any Democrat had ever raised, and indeed it was said that Dukakis won the important 'first primary'—fundraising—that led to his later victories in the primaries of the winter and spring of 1988. Although a great deal of the money was spent on the primary campaigns, a hefty sum was available for the general election, and more was being raised every day until 8 November. Because of recent 'reforms' in campaign financing, and because of the institution of federally-financed general elections (both Bush and Dukakis got about \$46 million apiece), much of the money Dukakis raised had to be spent in a roundabout way, so as not to be charged directly to his campaign. The scam was to conduit those millions to local Democratic parties in the several states, which then became nominal 'party development committees', but actually worked as Dukakis-Bentsen organizations—without legal spending limits. In Illinois, for instance, the official Dukakis committee employed five or six workers as the campaign ended; the state 'party development' group had about 115 paid staff.

Despite the fact that they were working for Dukakis, many of the people in charge of the state parties had been in favour of one of the other white candidates in the primaries. Few from the Jackson campaign were integrated into the local Dukakis efforts. For the most part, the locals did not have the slightest interest in registering new voters from the black and white underclass. Local Democrats enjoy the privileges they have as party leaders. They know that expansion of their own state electorates can only mean trouble down the road. The threat from a Jackson-inspired insurgency looms larger than any benefit they might receive from a large turnout in a presidential election. In fact, most of them have no particular

stake in the formation of a Democratic Administration in Washington. Even the occasional 'pork barrel' projects and federal grants they get for their districts are controlled by the Congress, which is likely to remain solidly Democratic no matter who wins the Presidency. Most Democratic senators and representatives in leadership roles would probably prefer that a Republican be in the White House, so as not to limit their sway over Congress. In America's tripartite system, Senator Ted Kennedy or House Speaker Jim Wright, for example, are far more important as leaders of the 'Congressional government' under a Bush administration than they would be as Congressional subordinates of a Dukakis administration. (Republicans, on the other hand, have no hope of running both houses of Congress in the foreseeable future, so most Republican senators and representatives would have more visibility and power under a Republican president than they would as minority members of Congress.) Leaders of the Democratic 'Congressional government' did not kill themselves campaigning for the ticket in the recent election. The reason was not that figures such as Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia or Governor (and Senator-elect) Charles Robb of Virginia—Lyndon Johnson's son-in-law—disliked Dukakis's platform or his ideological position, whatever it was. The fact is that they were perfectly pleased to see him lose. America is moving into a weird, seat-of-the-pants stage of pre-parliamentary government, in which 'the government' in Congress competes with 'the government' in the White House. Lately, Congress has been in charge.

Dukakis's strategists had always counted on a 'low-turnout' election, and nothing they did later in the campaign changed that course. After Dukakis was elected for a third (non-consecutive) term as Governor of Massachusetts in November 1986, his chief political adviser, John Sasso, drew up a long memorandum setting out the plan and the rationale for a Dukakis run for the Presidency in 1988. Sasso accepted the size and shape of the electorate as it looked in early 1987 and argued that to win the following year Dukakis had only to transfer a number of 'Reagan Democrats', i.e. Southern whites and Northern ethnics, from the Republican to the Democratic column. Dukakis was instructed to run a 'suburban' campaign, which entailed the elimination of black and 'lower-strata' issues from his political agenda. Voter registration among those constituencies would obviously be a low-order priority, for any appeal to minorities and the poor could alienate suburban voters; or so the theory went.

Sasso's view of politics was static and very much influenced by currently fashionable political science of the quantifiable kind. Jackson took a much more dynamic, transformative approach. He began to redefine the parties in ideological terms, to bring in millions of previously apolitical citizens, and to create a permanent movement that might someday take over the Democratic Party—as the right wing took over the Republican Party between 1960 and 1980. The populist part of Jackson's project was that his movement would be built from the bottom up rather than the top down, and the leadership would be made accountable to its base. That, of course, is the problematic part. The Jackson 'movement', which is both more and less than the 'Rainbow Coalition' which he leads, is much more authentic an expression of popular demands than any other campaign in America since the original Populist efforts at the turn of the century, but

it is also a traditional Democratic Party campaign, and it is doubtful that the 'bottom' will ever control the 'top'.

Class and Race

Jackson's importance in the last five years has been his direct engagement of class and race and his strategy of electoral expansion. Beginning in the summer of 1983, Jackson set out to change the course of politics in the South, that most resistant of all regions. Touring the burgeoning cities, the dusty towns and the steaming cotton counties from the Carolinas to the Mississippi Delta, he convinced, cajoled and in some cases almost dragged blacks to registration desks and polling places with such success that more than two million new voters entered the political process for the first time. Not only that, but blacks were encouraged and organized to run for office in a conscious plan to form the basis of a progressive bloc within the Democratic Party at both the local and national levels. By the election of 1984, the strategy had developed well enough to buck the Reagan landslide and provide the margin of victory for two white Southern senators—Howell Heflin of Alabama and Albert Gore Jr. of Tennessee, and to contribute decisively in the North (where registration drives and bloc-building were also underway) to the elections of liberals Paul Simon of Illinois and Carl Levin in Michigan. Then in 1986, when Reaganism was in decline, the Jackson strategy paid off handsomely. Eight more Democrats were elected in the South with Jackson's 'new voters' providing the edge. Not one of them had a majority of the white vote in their state; indeed, only one—Terry Sanford of North Carolina—got more than forty per cent of it. In addition, voters across the slowly widening spectrum of the Rainbow Coalition were decisive in reelecting the liberal Alan Cranston in California. What's more, for the first time in a decade young blacks voted in higher proportions than young whites. No less authority than George Bush's campaign manager, Lee Arwater (himself a Southerner), was impressed. 'It's a tribute to Jesse Jackson,' he told the *Washington Post*. 'These are voters he's been targeting for the last four to five years, and I didn't realize he was as effective as he apparently was.' All in all, it could be said that Jackson and the Rainbow gave the Senate back to the Democrats (after a brief Republican reign during the early Reagan years) and made possible a new liberal politics in the dying days of the Reagan Administration.

Previous blocs of blacks, workers, farmers and others the likes of which Jackson calls 'the dispossessed' were delivered to Democratic candidates and then ignored on policy matters until the next election. But the new Rainbow voters (for want of a better name) were kept in a kind of permanent if hypothetical caucus by Jackson and his political organizers, until such time as they could be used for leverage on an important issue. The first national test of the caucus's strength came with Reagan's nomination of the rightist Robert Bork to be a justice of the Supreme Court. More than a mere confirmation contest, it was a comeback fight for liberals who hadn't won a big one since the early 1970s. One after another, Southern Democrats who wouldn't have dreamed of supporting Northern liberals in a straight ideological struggle ten or twenty years ago, now joined in the vote against Bork. Three previous Reaganite appointments

to the Court had been confirmed. Bork was beaten. The difference, this time, was Jackson.

At the moment of maximum opportunity during the Senate hearings on the Bork nomination, Jackson himself came to call on Senator Heflin of Alabama, the lone deep-Southern Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, and arguably the key to the entire confirmation process. Without 'nays' from all or most of the conservative Democrats who customarily oppose affirmative action for minority interests, sexual equality, rights of privacy and restrictions on the police—and support judges of like minds—Bork would almost certainly be seated. The Southerners, as well as a few wavering Republicans, were likely to follow Heflin's lead. Heflin came out of the hearings to greet Jackson in an anteroom. 'Good morning, Reverend,' the Senator said graciously to the Preacher; 'we've been expecting you.' The two men chatted amiably about matters on their mind: Bork and his record, Southern politics, and what Heflin delicately referred to as the 'feelings of the new voters' in the region. Jackson's presence implicitly reminded Howell that he had been elected by those Rainbow voters. By the time Jackson left, he knew that Heflin would stand against the nomination.

As he prepared to run again for the Presidency in 1988, Jackson shifted his focus from the black community to a much more difficult 'populist' constituency, with an appeal based on class rather than racial issues. He set up headquarters for the important Iowa caucus campaign (the first of the pre-election primary season) in the tiny town of Greenfield, in lovely farm country seized by the full-blown crisis of American agriculture: monopolization by corporate agribusiness, restriction of credit for small farmers, elimination of the family farm, residential and commercial development of the rural countryside, and pollution, degradation and depletion of agricultural resources. While six of the Democratic candidates offered one or another remedial policy²⁷ or minor reform, Jackson campaigned on a programme of political empowerment for the rural constituency.

Jackson's approach to the farm crisis presents a useful illustration of his new populist/progressive politics. The approaching demise of the family farm system cannot be averted by managerial manoeuvres or market gimmicks, he suggested, but requires a wholesale assault on the political economy of agriculture. The Reagan Administration has accelerated a process that began decades ago, in which the family farm is being replaced by 'megafarms' increasingly owned by absentee management firms and agribusiness corporations. Some firms are building vertical monopolies in the industry with land as the bottom layer of a structure that will include feed lots for cattle, meat-packing houses, machinery manufacturing plants, grain-exporting companies, supermarkets and shopping malls—all in a transnational system. Like Stalinism in Russia in the 1930s, Reaganism in America in the 1980s seeks to rationalize agriculture to respond to centralized planning and presumed economies of scale. Here, of course, the centralization is corporate rather than collective, and the economies are meant to benefit the corporate class rather than the collective masses. But many of the methods of forced removal of farmers and the consequences to the traditional communities contain chilling parallels.

No kulaks have been shot in Iowa (although there are many suicides), but tens of thousands of families have been driven from their homes, many after three, four or five generations, and sent to distant towns where they shovel chicken manure out of poultry 'factories', or shovel fast food to customers in roadside stands. In many cases they migrate to the losing end of the agricultural chain they once helped forge. Unless radical reforms are instituted—a most unlikely prospect, to be sure—half of the farms in Iowa will go under in the next ten years. What Jackson calls a 'new feudalism' is settling over the rural heartland. Farmers default on their loans; banks and insurance companies—and sometimes government agencies—foreclose; sometimes they burn and bulldoze the lovely old white farmhouses, the barns, the silos and the stand of trees that protected the homestead from the prairie winds. Scorching the earth saves money by lowering property taxes. Families who simply cannot tear themselves from their birthplace are sometimes allowed to stay on the land by the new farm-management companies or megafarmers in return for work done. The new tenants represent the saddest sector of a shift in productive relations that will amount to billions, or perhaps trillions of dollars by the end of the century.

Changing the Equation

On the trail in Iowa, Jackson excited voters more by promising them participation in 'the power structure'—the organizing principle of the old civil rights movement—than by offering them specific programmes and policies to cure their complaints. Unlike most of the other Democrats campaigning in the state, he did not hurl a string of neoliberal proposals from the hustings. His delivery was at once personal and political rather than procedural and managerial. For example, he told a crowd of recently laid-off workers in Iowa Falls that 'we must change the equation. There's no sense of corporate justice, of fairness. We'd better wake up and fight' to stop the 'merger maniacs'. The town was reeling from the decision of Farmland Foods to close its pork packing plant and idle one-quarter of the local industrial work force. The all-white audience responded to the class appeal and 'crossed the line' of race, as Jackson hoped, to support the black candidate.

Jackson did well in the Iowa caucuses that winter. (In the confusing and arcane caucus 'election' in that state, voters registered with a party go to a small community meeting one night in February and line up—physically—under placards designated for each of the candidates.) He actually won or came in a close second (in the seven-man race) in the places, such as Greenfield's Adair County, where he concentrated his organization. Overall, he broke into 'double digits' in the percentage of votes and established himself as a viable player in the 1988 Democratic electoral game. A few weeks later, in the many primaries held on 'Super Tuesday', Jackson won several states—and most big cities—and helped eliminate most of the remaining white candidates. He broadened his class campaign to include white workers in decaying industries and those in the 'Reagan class' who have been forced to take low-paying, dead-end jobs in the so-called service sector—the area where employment has increased in the last decade. He talked about the difficulty of the workers' lives, about the degraded quality of work, and about the powerlessness of the working

poor as a class: all in terms entirely new to American politics, at least since the Roosevelt era. Jackson often spoke to eight or nine audiences in a day, sometimes travelling over an area of tens or hundreds or even thousands of miles (jet-campaigning came of age in this election), each time combining revivalist emotion, populist-coalition politics and civil rights struggle rhetoric in a remarkable political performance. 'We work every day,' he reminded the crowds, who invariably responded with knowing assent. 'And we are still poor. We pick up your garbage; we work every day. We drive your cars, we take care of your children, we empty your bed-pans, we pick up your garbage, we sweep your apartments; we work every day. We cook your food, and we don't have time to cook our own. We change your hospital beds and wipe your fevered brow and we can't afford to lie in that bed when we get sick. We work every day.' By the end of the speech the nods of approval were mixed with tears.

As millions of Americans saw when Jackson spoke at the Democratic Convention in Atlanta last summer, the appeal to class and the description of work tapped emotions and released energies as no other politician in memory has been able to do. The reality of work never gets mentioned in political parlance. Then Jackson comes along and talks in simply eloquent terms about the quality of ordinary lives and the whole country stops—and weeps. At the end of the long season of primaries, Jackson had won elections or caucuses in almost every important city in the country (including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston and Los Angeles), a majority of the states of the Deep South, as well as Michigan, Maine, Vermont, Alaska and other Northern states where a winning black candidacy had been thought impossible. He had mobilized millions of voters on a platform of 'economic justice', racial justice, and the realignment of America's relations with the Third World. In Atlanta, his forces raised previously taboo subjects, such as Palestinian rights, 'soak-the-rich' taxation and significant restraint in military projects and expenditures. One-third of the delegates to the convention were members of the Rainbow, most of them black. There was a populist look and feel to the place such as had not been seen in American politics since the first election of Andrew Jackson (no kin), more than a hundred and fifty years ago. So impressive was the Jackson presence that Dukakis was forced to negotiate an 'Atlanta Pact' promising the Jackson forces a prominent role in the campaign and in the administration if Dukakis won, plus support for Jackson on a number of special items on the Rainbow agenda: voter registration, radical reform of registration laws, sanctions against South Africa, 'statehood' for the predominantly black District of Columbia. (Dukakis quickly broke all of his promises, but that's another story.) Jackson lost the nomination (although he gained more votes than any losing candidate in history) but his moment had come, and no one doubts that another will come again.



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review

Terry Eagleton

The Silences of David Lodge

The success of the 'campus' novel in England is not hard to account for. Ever since Burke and Coleridge's testy polemics against the Jacobins, the English attitude to the intelligentsia has been one of profound ambivalence. Intellectuals are seen as faintly sinister figures, bohemian and nonconformist, treasonable clerks whose heartless celebrations pose a threat to the unreflective pieties of ordinary life. But they are also pathetically ineffectual characters—crumpled figures of fun pursuing their ludicrous abstractions at a remote distance from the bustle of daily life. The anxiety and resentment they inspire can thus be conveniently defused by a sense of their farcical irrelevance; and Napoleon's dismissal of the Enlightenment ideologues as at once subversive and superfluous captures this ambivalence exactly. The intellectual combines the fascination of the offbeat with the comic relief of the harmless eccentric, and is thus fit meat for a kind of fiction which equivocates between a satiric criticism of everyday middle-class life and an unshaken commitment to its fundamental values. Something of the same ambiguity can be traced in the relation of the university

to society as a whole. As a place set somewhat apart, the university has the glamour of the deviant and untypical, providing the novelist with a conveniently closed world marked by intellectual wrangling, political infighting and sexual intrigue. Yet in its bureaucratic routines and down-at-heel dreariness it is also sufficiently continuous with the wider society to act as a microcosm of middle-class mores. It is neither too hermetically sealed from the social order to be of merely specialist interest, nor too commonplace to be merely tedious. The 'campus' novel thus provides one kind of solution to a problem which has never ceased to dog the modern English novel, and which is nothing less than how ordinary social experience is to offer a fertile soil for fictional creation. The striking number of contemporary novels written in England but set in some non-English locale seems to testify to a genuine difficulty here—to a sense that from the viewpoint of 'creative' writing there is something peculiarly unpropitious about the typical social experience of an industrially declining, culturally parochial, post-imperial nation. English literature's traditional solution to this dilemma has been to import the exotic, estranging perspectives it lacks: hence the entry into the indigenous canon of the emigrés and expatriates (James, Conrad, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Joyce, Beckett), writers who brought with them a modernist or avant-garde bravura at odds with the realist, empiricist cast of the native culture, but to which that culture could for a brief historical moment play host. In writers like E.M. Forster or Graham Greene, who export their experience to the colonial world, this movement is clearly reversible. The academic novel can offer here a characteristically English compromise, anchored as it is in the idiosyncrasies of middle-class life, yet sufficiently askew, unconventional and (given the global reach of academia) internationalist, to call that familiar existence into satiric question.

The two leading comic academic novelists of contemporary England—David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury—are both literary theorists as well as imaginative writers, a fact which is surely significant. It has always been superficially puzzling why a subject as specialist and esoteric as literary theory should have given rise in Britain to such apparently disproportionate ideological wranglings, epitomized in recent years by the extraordinarily excited attention lavished by the media on the refusal of Cambridge University to promote a post-structuralist critic. Why should a discourse of metaphor and metonymy, of signifiers and subject positions, provoke such passions and polemics? The answer, surely, lies not in the field of literary studies as such, but in its intersection with a wider ideological formation. It is a familiar left case, recurrently argued in the pages of this journal, that British bourgeois society is marked by a conflict between a pervasive cultural traditionalism and the modernizing imperatives of contemporary capitalism. In that process of capitalist modernization, the traditional humanities are by no means struck redundant; on the contrary, they continue to encode values and pieties which are ideologically essential. Yet they are also rendered progressively marginal, abstract and ineffectual by the dynamic of capitalist development itself. Liberal humanism continues to enshrine certain central moral imperatives, which late bourgeois society can on no account simply leave behind; but it also appears increasingly as a residual ideological hangover from an earlier phase of capitalist development, out of step with some of the later requirements and life-styles of the same system.

The British Microcosm

For historical reasons, British society provides a peculiarly apt microcosm of this contradiction; and it is because the contentions between literary theory and literary humanism are in turn microcosmic of this condition that they have had such far-reaching reverberations. The conflict between theory and humanism in the literary academy touches indirectly on this structural lag or hiatus at the heart of the British social formation. Structuralism is more than an analytic procedure: it is badge and code-word for a form of intellectual technocracy—alien, professionalized, European—which in its anti-humanist austerity strikes at the roots of English empiricist humanism, and so rehearses once more (though this time, some might argue, as farce) the quarrel between the pious Coleridge and the clinical Jacobins. The battle between the contradictory English perceptions of the intellectual, as at once sinister and shambolic, dangerously dissident and innocuously eccentric, becomes metonymic of the ideological dilemma of Britain as a whole, torn between a cherished but threadbare amateur humanism and an efficient but alienating professionalism. It is not surprising that this issue should come to a head in the field of literary criticism, which has always displayed an embarrassing tension between its specialist procedures and the 'human universals' of its content. Literary studies are the flagship of the humanities; but with the advent of literary theory the unthinkable has occurred, as the jargon of technological specialism now penetrates the very bastion of humane values. Even literature, the last refuge of the genteel amateur, is now perilously infected with its scientific other; and it is no doubt for this reason that what might seem a mere parochial skirmish within English studies has come to assume such ominous ideological proportions.

The politics of this situation are notably ambiguous. For structuralism at once mimes the technocratic procedures of late capitalism, and threatens to undermine its protective humanist ideologies. It turns the former against the latter, installing itself in the lag between base and superstructure so as to discredit the humanist assumptions of bourgeois society with a theoretical version of its own reifying social practices. But if a traditional liberal humanism thus appears increasingly tarnished and shopsoiled, it remains for such liberal bourgeois ideologues as Lodge and Bradbury the only available source of social critique and fundamental value. This is so because the political—an alternative resolution of this dilemma which would seek out its very material conditions—is for them part of the problem rather than the solution. Marxism and feminism are yet more instances of theoreticist Eurospeak, to be blandly satirized along with floating signifiers and intertextuality. They are simply moves within the semiotic game—whereas the beauty of liberal humanism is that it is at once a move within the game and a move outside it, to those intuitive decencies beyond the long arm of politics or theory.

In the case of David Lodge, the ambivalences discussed so far are interestingly overdetermined by his Roman Catholicism. For the Roman Catholic church contains two major currents which are not always easy to square: a lineage of rigorous doctrinal thought, and a tradition of ethical and social concern. The former pulls towards a tenacious Thomistic intellectualism; the latter towards a pastoral or evangelical preoccupation with

the common life of society. At the worst, these twin currents combine to deliver a callous pedantry in such matters as abortion and contraception. At the best, they can blend to incline those brought up within them to the political left. For the typical Roman Catholic receives an early training in the habits of systematic analysis which sits more comfortably with structural enquiry and holistic social theory than with liberal empiricism. Instinctively hostile to the spirit of Anglican compromise, the Catholic inherits along with this respect for strenuous thought an essentially collective theology, wary of individualism and the inner light. Values and ideas are grasped from the outset in institutional terms, as questions of common religious practice rather than private conscience. The heritage of 'social Catholicism', notably vigorous in Britain, can translate itself under propitious conditions into radical political terms. Moreover, this whole ideological formation, in Britain at least, is the product of a semi-ghettoized immigrant culture. Apart from a recusant rump, the British Roman Catholic is likely to be of working-class Irish immigrant provenance, conscious of his or her faith as a badge of difference and subalternity within the dominant social order. Even where this upbringing does not include a certain spontaneous sympathy for Irish republicanism, it is likely to be shaped by the political sensibility of a society which did not produce an indigenous bourgeoisie until this century. As in many such ghettoized environments, however, a younger generation is encouraged by its educationally deprived elders to succeed in the broader culture—to integrate and conform, while privately preserving the faith. The Roman Catholic in Britain is the classic 'scholarship child', urged on to intellectual achievement by a culture which has traditionally placed high value on learning and literature, but socially displaced and psychologically estranged. That these tensions can then resolve themselves in left political terms is evident enough in the relatively high number of former Roman Catholics within the British left.

Religion and Liberalism

Lodge's own social background would not seem intensively Irish; but in the 'educated plain man' posture of much of his writing he enacts something of the inside/outside ambivalence typical of that situation. It is arguable, however, that with him the impulse to integrate has proved considerably stronger than the drive of critical dissent, while not entirely eradicating the latter. Unlike most other prominent Catholic novelists of the century, Lodge's religious faith appears in his writing in peculiarly privatized, notional form. He is, in effect, a thoroughly secularized author, whose Catholicism makes little difference to his conventional liberal vision other than providing him with convenient materials for social commentary and comic satire. Unlike a Graham Greene, whose novels continually pose secular and religious experience in complex tension, or an Evelyn Waugh, whose secular world is so remorselessly two-dimensional that God can be sensed as an implied alternative to it, Lodge's writing is almost wholly unmarked by spiritual passion—a dimension which apparently remains locked within a separate compartment of the self, and which would only disturb the comic equipose of his fiction. The only novel of his which engages Catholicism as its central theme—*How Far Can You Go?*—is ethical and sociological rather than

theological in its focus, and commits the banal Catholic error of mistaking sexuality for morality.

In this sense, then, Lodge is not a *Catholic* writer at all; instead, his work reflects a necessary marginalization of such exotic metaphysical commitments in the commonsensical world of English middle-class liberalism. The authorial persona which emerges from his fiction is too hopelessly balanced and conventionally-minded to entertain any such absolutist creed, which must then remain a disconnected set of doctrines which for some private reason he happens to hold. It is a little as though one were to discover that Martin Amis is in private life a Seventh Day Adventist, or that Margaret Drabble is a dedicated Satanist. Where Lodge is most typically Roman Catholic is not in the substance of his fiction, but in the running conflict between doctrine and experience, now translated as the fraught encounter between literary theory and liberal humanism. Like literary theory, Roman Catholic dogma is a kind of hermetic game, a shuffling of neo-scholastic categories with little apparent relation to daily life; yet these categories concern the most crucial truths of human existence, solidly 'realist' beneath their apparently non-referential significations. What seems at first glance a wholly dissociated discourse in fact rigorously orders one's routine life, as the apparently 'unreal' discourse of romance organizes the minute social details of Lodge's novel *Small World*. From the sacramental to the semiotic is a shorter distance than it might seem.

In the conflict between theory and experience, Lodge ensures that the former enters the arena seriously weakened. His theoretical interests are in fact highly selective: he is a latter-day Formalist, comfortable with those theoretical currents which confine themselves to linguistics and the literary text, uneasy with political and psychoanalytic ideas of more radical import.¹ His theoretical writing is not only derivative and unadventurous, but—like that of Jonathan Culler in the USA—given over to domesticating and defusing otherwise disruptive European insights for the purposes of home consumption. The title of his most recent critical volume, *Working with Structuralism*, strikes just the essential balance of closeness and caution, in the manner of a circus trainer's autobiography entitled *Living with Leo*. Much the same can be said of Lodge's experimentations in literary form, which rarely get beyond the odd self-reflexive flourish or experimental narrative device within what remains a sedate, commercially acceptable realism. It is interesting in this respect that his most ambitiously experimental text to date—*Small World*—chooses as its dominant code the genre of romance; for romance is at once among the most self-consciously 'literary' of forms in its elaborate improbabilities, and a mode which in its erotic interest, happy ending and spirit of optimism is readily acceptable to the realist sensibility.

The typical strategy of a Lodge novel is to place in caricatured antithesis the ideological poles of his world (theory and humanism, Zapp and Swallow, California and Birmingham, modernism and realism, technocrat and common man), allowing each to put the other into ironic

¹ For his critical and theoretical work, see *The Language of Fiction*, London 1966, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, London 1977, and *Working with Structuralism*, London 1981.

question while the author himself disappears conveniently down the middle. The irony of this strategy, of course, is that its implied posture of Arnoldian disinterestedness places the text firmly on one side of the duality it is supposed to mediate. Lodge's fictions guy the ineffectual academic liberal—but this, precisely, is testimony to the resilience of their liberalism, which thus rejects and retrieves itself at a stroke. The capacity to put itself into amused ironic question has been a commonplace of such thought since the days of Matthew Arnold, so that the position wrests its superiority from the very jaws of self-critical collapse. As with the deconstructor Paul de Man, the helpless vulnerability of one's case becomes the exact index of its complacent unassailability.

Sex as Substitute

Lodge's writing, both fictional and critical, has displayed from the outset an almost total 'plain man's' inability to grasp politics as anything but either trivial or abstract; and there would seem no doubt that the acclaim he has received from the literary establishment has a good deal to do with this convenient blindspot. Since his novels are largely innocent of political or spiritual passion, they need to find their dramas and intensities elsewhere, and do so in sex. Sex provides Lodge with a suburban substitute for the high emotional currents which the careful comic distancing of his fictions otherwise expels, and it is a major theme of his most recent novel *Nice Work*, in which an academic feminist and literary theorist (Robyn Penrose) is drawn into a sexual affair with a truculent, philistine, averagely sexist managing director (Vic Wilcox).² Since Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, it has been a familiar assumption of the English novel that sexual desire is no respecter of social divisions. Fielding's Lady Booby makes sexual advances to Joseph, her footman; and Fielding at once satirizes her for lowering herself socially, while implying contradictorily that class divisions are relatively unreal in comparison with universal human appetites. Desire, then, is in one sense a subversive force, traversing the 'artifice' of social distinctions with scant regard for their authority; but in doing so it lays bare a human essence or general common humanity, which can be a convenient ideological doctrine for the dominant social power. This ambiguity then becomes available for the contemporary liberal humanist novelist, for whom (as in E.M. Forster's *Howard's End*) sexual love must offer that transcendence of social barriers which politics cannot provide. In Forster, a liberal realist recognition of the extreme difficulty of this project consorts with a Romantic utopian impulse for its achievement, reflecting at once the ideological gloom of a now marginal liberalism, and the residual buoyancy of its earlier, more sanguine and idealist days. It is precisely this contradictory structure of feeling which Lodge's *Nice Work* inherits from its forebears, in a Thatcherite Britain where liberalism is at once severely disillusioned and unable entirely to relinquish its fond idealist hopes.

If *Nice Work* is modelled on *Howard's End*, it also draws heavily on Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), in which a liberal middle-class *rugéus*, Margaret Hale, is ambiguously attracted and repelled by the hard-nosed Northern manufacturer Thornton, saves him at a point of

² *Nice Work*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1988

dramatic crisis from the wrath of his own striking workers, and finally humanizes him by marriage, thus tempering his callous attitudes to his labour force. The relationship between Margaret and Thornton is in a Lukácsian sense 'typical'—for what is concretized in this liaison is nothing less than the pattern of alliance and antagonism between two key sectors of the Victorian ruling class: its cultivated, enlightened wing, and its harshly Benthamite captains of industry. *North and South*, unlike Gaskell's earlier novel *Mary Barton*, is thus a story of *intra*-class conflict, at a point where the ruling bloc needs to overcome its internal dissensions in order to consolidate its sway over a proletariat just emerging from Chartist militancy. To this extent, Gaskell's liberal humanism is harnessed to the requirements of bourgeois hegemony; and *New World* reveals over a century and a half later how little things have changed.

In one respect, they have changed decisively. For there is of course nothing historically 'typical' about the relationship between Penrose and Wilcox, or even, one might add, empirically plausible. The novel is forced to resort to an improbable plot device simply to bring the pair physically together. There is no question of an alliance between socialist feminism and contemporary capitalism, as there is for Gaskell between a progressive but ineffectually idealist middle-class stratum, and the uncouth but admirably dynamic energies of the Manchester mill-owners. At one level, the novel recognizes its parodic 'misreading' of its Victorian forebear well enough: there can be no common interests, Robyn avers, between herself and Wilcox, and the couple finally go their own ways. But to take over another literary text is to appropriate something of its built-in ideology in the very act of defacing it; and to this extent the suggestion that Robyn and Wilcox *could* somehow come together is insistently present. A realistic acknowledgement of objectively antagonistic interests thus consorts with a liberal utopian hope that divided social groups might finally, vaguely emerge; contradiction becomes simply difference and division. The content of Gaskell's ideology is by and large rejected, but its 'spirit' is nostalgically preserved, and underscored by the fact that, as individuals, Robyn and Wilcox do indeed learn something from each other. Whatever our social differences, we are all human under the skin—or perhaps, more accurately for Lodge, under the trousers.

This hope, however, can be sustained only by a considerable sleight of hand. For it assumes that Robyn is indeed a kind of Margaret Hale, essentially a middle-class liberal, and thus refuses to take seriously her socialist-feminist politics. The influence of the Gaskellian model thus succeeds in distorting and belittling the female protagonist. On Wilcox's side, the novel certainly takes the pressure of social and ideological differences, but it does not succeed in extending the same understanding to Penrose. Indeed its treatment of her is notably less sympathetic than the portrayal of Wilcox, one of Lodge's somewhat pathetic *hommes moyens sensuels* for whom he has a suspiciously intimate fellow feeling. The limits of the text's patriarchal imagination are nowhere more obvious than in the contrast between the convincingly characterized Vic and the externally presented Robyn. For much of the time, Robyn is made to speak like a theoretical textbook, spouting indigestible chunks of Lacan; and this threadbare caricature, fit target for a cheap laugh, is overshadowed by the persuasively realist Wilcox. Whereas in his case readerly expectations are ironically

undermined (for all his drawbacks, Wilcox turns out to be honest, sensitive and intelligent), the stereotype of the sexually independent woman remains on the whole unchallenged. Robyn, for example, has little time for sex, since intellectual women are of course irritatingly passionless. She behaves rather like a Victorian prude, needing to get drunk to have intercourse with Wilcox, and then apparently repressing the whole affair. Whatever the novel's intellectual convictions about the impossibility of a permanent relationship between its protagonists, its actual feelings pull strongly in the other direction: Robyn's brusque refusal of her poignantly love-struck suitor is made to count against her, showing her up as callous and even frivolous. Cast off by this frigid bluestocking, Vic turns back to his family—a group which has been shown by the novel in a consistently negative light but which now fuses lovingly and improbably around him. The fusion is catalysed in part by economic necessity: if Vic now needs his wife, it is for one thing because she is going to become his secretary. (Indeed he displays a curious inability to make love to a woman *unless* she is a secretary: Robyn has been masquerading as Vic's secretary just before they consummate their relationship.) Part of the solution to the problems of Thatcher's Britain is thus Thatcherite familial values, in which Victorianism and Roman Catholicism may harmoniously mingle.

Theory and Real Life

So far, there is little doubt that *Nice Work* thoroughly deserves the Booker Prize. But there are other reasons for such an appropriate reward. The novel is Lodge's most explicit exercise so far in the running conflict between 'theory' and 'real life'; but it is clear that the scales are heavily weighted in favour of the latter. Penrose is a dedicated feminist; but there is little sense in which the text takes the pressure of the interests she speaks up for, which make no concrete appearance within it, and which are certainly not regarded as being as much a part of the 'real world' as Wilcox's factory. Once more, by subtly separating Robyn from her own political allegiances, the novel can win a few easy victories at her expense. 'Theory' does not divide for Lodge between the more and the less esoteric—between those ideas which genuinely articulate 'real world' interests, and those which belong merely to a hermetic game. Since he has never given much credence to the former kind of theorizing—indeed since he has consistently displayed a suburbanite suspicion of it—theory as a whole can appear in *Nice Work* as pretty much an unreal, privileged, self-indulgent pursuit, as Robyn's boyfriend's ominously easy slide from semiotics to stocks and shares makes forcefully clear. The novel does not entirely endorse this sceptical view of theorizing, but it is nevertheless powerfully insisted on. But if socialism and feminism are just more Parisian gobbledygook, then the falsifying equation between Penrose and Mrs Gaskell's Margaret Hale is surreptitiously underscored. For what is wrong with theory on this view, what brings it into conflict with the pragmatic world of Wilcox, is not so much that many of its interests are politically antagonistic to that world, but simply the fact that it is abstracted and disconnected. And this in turn suggests that all that then needs to be done—however frustratingly difficult it will prove to be—is to put these sundered spheres together again, in a classic Forsterian act of connection. The novel, in other words, hesitates between two quite different cases: the acknowledgement that radical politics are indeed implacably, irreconcilably

opposed to Vic's capitalist doctrines, and the thesis that what is at stake here is simply a gulf between abstract ideas and real life. In this sense, what has in fact been for long a *radical* position—that theory and social reality should be closely related—becomes the vehicle for a distinctly non-radical vision which downplays at a stroke the reality of Robyn's politics and the unsavoury nature of capitalism.

The final point might seem questionable, given the amount of time *Nice Work* spends in depicting the unvarnished brutalities of industrial exploitation. In the end, Vic will withdraw from this world in disgust—but only to set up, with the aid of a timely legacy from Robyn, as a small entrepreneur. Since such small-time business will with luck escalate into big-time business, Robyn has been instrumental in perpetuating the social order she rejects. So she is a Margaret Hale after all, whatever the text's tongue-in-cheek literary ironies; in a kind of double bluff, the novel generates Gaskellian expectations, goes on to undermine them, and then partly fulfils them. Gaskell's *sexual* resolution must be rejected—Robyn and Vic do not end up together—but the liberal's *material* support for capitalism is perfectly acceptable. Or if *Nice Work* is being ironic about Robyn's final complicity with the system, then this is just another dig at her pseudo-politics. It would seem as if liberal humanism since Gaskell and Forster, under the pressure of the women's movement, has matured *sexually* in some respects, but matured in no other way. The novel cannot be blind to the fact that small-scale business breeds larger enterprise, since Vic has explicitly said as much to Robyn earlier in the narrative; but this gloomy recognition is in conflict with a petty-bourgeois faith in the 'creativity' and 'autonomy' of the little entrepreneur, and so must be written out of the final comic resolution.

That resolution, in fact, is a remarkably hollow affair, jarringly divergent from the novel's previous realism. The comic ending of *Small World* could pass itself off as a kind of literary joke or romantic device; but though the conclusion of *Nice Work* has a similar ironic self-consciousness, it is also in earnest. The novel should not in fact end happily: the whole of its textual logic pulls against such an anodyne *dénouement*. It is a thoroughly disillusioned work, symptomatic of a liberal humanism which has fallen on hard times since its Victorian hey-day, and since the days when the Wilcox of *Howard's End* could transcend the social divide by the power of love. But a belief in the redemptive capacities of the individual, however tattered, lingers on, to furnish the work with its qualifiedly comic conclusion. Vic Wilcox will begin reading Tennyson, and Robyn, sobered by her encounter with the Satanic mills, will turn down a well-heeled academic post in the United States. The answer to the system lies with the individual, and other such liberal banalities. But this is not, nowadays, an answer which even the liberals can fully credit; and the novel is aware that what it says in this respect is at odds with what it shows. The ending must therefore, as with *Small World*, sceptically dissociate itself from its own seriousness, as it seeks to have its ideology and transcend it at the same stroke. 'Structuralism' has now in effect come to mean a kind of ironic textual playfulness which allows you a certain fulfilling emotional investment while simultaneously putting you at a safe ideological distance from it; and in this sense it is merely the latest, fashionable rehearsal of a familiar liberal gesture.

Nice Work pokes a little plain-minded fun at Penrose's belief that all literary texts revolve around eloquent silences; but the silence in its own discourse resonates through its every letter. What is forcibly suppressed by the work is the possibility of any theory which might have practical foundations in social life. To admit any such possibility to Lodge's scrupulously antithetical world would be to deconstruct the whole affair. *Nice Work* reinvents the polarized vision of a George Orwell, for whom theory was for the Nancy intellectuals and reality for the big-boned miners. Just as *The Road to Wigan Pier* had to edit out the politically articulate proletarians whom Orwell encountered on his trek to the North, so *Nice Work* heavily underwrites the old English empiricist prejudice that ideas are one thing and life another. It would be wonderful, of course, if we could bring them together a little: as a nice chap, Lodge would like to see us all rubbing shoulders a bit more regularly. The novel thus displaces contradictions to simple division, and so becomes part of the problem to which it seeks a solution. Theory and practice can no more combine politically than they can sexually: at the sexual climax of the work, there is no real alternative between Vic's Romantic hermeneuticism—his pathetic overinvestment of the event with meaning—and Robyn's blank postmodernist insistence on its brute, meaningless factuality. On the evidence of *Small World*, the novelist himself is far closer to Vic here than to Robyn, Romantic eroticism being the appropriate sublimation for conventional domesticity, and casualness about sex its demonized other. (Robyn even giggles about Vic's ridiculous sexual idealization of her with her feminist friend, a black mark against her if ever there was one.) There can be no mediation between too much and too little meaning, just as there must be at all costs no set of theoretical ideas bound up with 'real life' situations. Such ideas must be either expunged from *Nice Work* or travestied as so much foreign flim-flam; and to this extent the novel is in profound collusion with the Britain about which it is so notably uneasy.

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Mothers in the Fatherland

In spring 1987, a political document caused a stir in the Federal Republic of Germany: the Mothers' Manifesto produced by a section of women in the Green Party. Some passed on to the business of the day with a feeling of kindly satisfaction—there was no longer much to fear from the political strength of the Green women. Others set angrily to work to restore the unity of left women with a scathing critique, and yet others warned with righteous dismay of the threat of fascism and the impending extinction of 'Rainbow Culture'. After all, the Nazi cult of motherhood is firmly fixed in historical memory. Even those who know hardly anything about the period are as familiar with the Mother's Cross as with the title of Hitler's *Main Kampf*. No one wants to have anything to do with all that, except perhaps on Mothers' Day, when the younger generation still shamefacedly tries to strike an uneasy balance between disavowal of the fascist legacy and a bad conscience over neglect of their mothers.

But what is so alarming about the Mothers' Manifesto of the Green Women, apart from the fact of mothers appearing as a political subject at all? The text itself reveals a movement still in its infancy; it is as uneven, contradictory and given to compromise as the grouping that drew it up. Frequently it is possible to grasp the intended meaning only from what it is articulated against. To that extent, a reduction of the Manifesto to one or two principal theses does it an injustice. Nonetheless, the essential point seems to me the demand for a renewal or overturning of society in the name of mother and child—'a society for the child at one's side'. Public life is to be organized in such a way that it can accommodate children. Mothers should be able to find places where, by exchanging child-care time with other mothers, they can lead a life of their own with children. A partnership in which fathers participate in child-raising is no longer a demand, since evidently this is taking too long to become a reality.

Postponed or discarded are the following goals of the women's movement: the necessity of women's paid employment; the dominance of questions of individual development and individual happiness; the reduction of the problems of motherhood to the socialization of child-raising, at least as a common task of the sexes; the emphasis on education and professional training; the question, above all, of equal rights. Priority is now attached to a direct demand for social structures which will provide a feminine sphere for mother and child. However, society will have to be transformed from its very foundations if the mother-child relationship is

to be made the standard of all values. Such protest can be anti-capitalist. But the set of demands is such that it is possible to conceive of practical reforms here and now, while structural change remains a mere utopia. In this way, a great number of viewpoints can be brought together in the motherhood formula.

The Mothers' Manifesto is a provisional outcome of earlier struggles among Green Women and is intended to be the platform for the newly formed *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (working group)—which means money, delegates and political influence within the party. The trigger for the mothers' movement in the Federal Republic was Chernobyl, an event of world-wide importance that had direct effects on everyday activity and was beyond the distinction between capitalism and socialism. The scandal made it evident that mothers could not discharge their allocated task—taking care of the health of future generations—without governmental power of their own and without policies on technology, in short, without regulating the world as a whole. In a flash it became general knowledge that decisions about the food on the dinner-table are not made in the kitchen, and this realization took practical shape in the protest against nuclear energy. Since milk and vegetables were most affected at first, mothers literally did not know what to give their children to eat without poisoning them. The protests of the women's movement, which interpreted the destructive powers in the male intellect and in male technology as gender-specific, were still familiar. Drawing on this, the mothers' outcry became a political force which for several months disrupted political meetings, events and speeches. Men, it was said, have no right whatsoever to participate in the discussion about Chernobyl, because they do not know what is at stake. As with the subsequent Mothers' Manifesto, women with and without children belonged to the mothers' fraction, just as there were many mothers among its alarmed opponents. It was a question of principle.

It is politically absurd to question the right of an emerging movement to exist or—as in a common response of the working-class movement to the new women's movement—to condemn it as essentially divisive and middle class. On the other hand, it is just as questionable simply to observe events, for history demonstrates that popular movements are not necessarily emancipatory, or need not remain so. To that extent, it is an appropriate moment to study the question of women and mothers at a focal point of history, in fascism.

Claudia Koonz's *Mothers in the Fatherland* is a really excellent starting point.¹ Her questions are addressed to history out of the women's movement; her doubts about the existing historiography are simultaneously doubts about the historical innocence of women. Her position allows her to see in the very denial of female guilt that same old male pen which continues the oppression of women in general. While the archives are full of the acts of male Nazis, she only rarely found women there, and then only as exceptions: as the mistress of a Nazi leader or a quite untypical 'heroine', as a pilot or as witch of Auschwitz. The actions of the millions of women who made up the everyday normality of fascism remained as

¹ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, Jonathan Cape 1987 (hbk.), Methuen 1988 (pbk.)

nameless and faceless as ever. Koonz's book shows that such an absence to be made the standard demonstrates the fruitfulness of research guided by theory. If women were not present in the politically recognized sphere, then perhaps they were to be found where their social activity found acknowledgement: in church welfare organizations and community work. Her research was carried out in church archives and with survivors of the period.

Race and Gender

Koonz's principal thesis runs as follows: not race alone, but race and gender were the pillars upon which National Socialism was erected. This combination allowed an integration across, and in spite of, class barriers. 'Germanic life of the future,' according to a contemporary communication, 'will be dominated by two absolute axioms: laws concerning race and laws regulating the polarity between the sexes' (205). As the biological replaced historical struggles over the relations of production, it was relatively simple, on the basis of the existing biological difference between men and women, to legitimate the same kind of distinction in the question of race. The aim was to expel Jews from political society. This thesis is both provocative and productive. It leads on to her central question: How was it possible to gain the consent of millions of women to a politics and an ideology which were profoundly hostile to women?

Koonz is determined to discover women as actors in history—even if on the wrong side—and not as mere victims of male violence. Using the example of fascism to draw out the fundamental role of gender relations in the reproduction of domination, she thus sets out to search for witnesses from the past. As has already been mentioned, she finds nothing significant in the archives. In a women's bookshop in Berlin, however, she chances upon *Frauen im Dritten Reich* (Women in the Third Reich), a book by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, Reichsfrauenführer (Reich Women's Leader), reprinted, without commentary, in a new edition. That it appeared to be a book written by a woman for women was enough for the bookshop to take an interest in its dissemination. This experience helped to form Koonz's approach and the nature of her questions. To what extent, she asked, is the feminist movement, through its discussions, demands and perspectives, pursuing a project of liberation which is truly resistant to the crimes of fascism? In other words, has the contemporary women's movement learned enough from history?

The relationship of women to state, politics and public life becomes the strategic pivot of Koonz's work. The main body of the book opens with a quotation from Marx on the contradiction between public and private, which is the foundation of the state, and a further one from Virginia Woolf, which sees the tyrannies and the servilities of the one sphere in the other. It is prefaced by an interview with Reich Women's Leader Scholtz-Klink forty years after. Here too the politically documented life of an individual can be read symptomatically. Scholtz-Klink, who was placed above millions of other women, was absent from the Nazi *Who's Who* until 1936 and from British documentation of senior Nazi figures (182). She seems to have altered her views as little as her book has been subject to criticism. Margaret Thatcher does not seem to her a solution to the

women question, nor does the way in which the new women's movement denigrates the life of the housewife. On the contrary, what is required is to seek out women in their everyday lives and to strengthen them there, as housewives and mothers.

Behind this rejection of the new women's movement (insofar as it does not itself relate to mothers) can be seen the movement of the Weimar period, against which the National Socialist articulation of the women's question was directed. Koonz first of all points to the soil on which Nazism flourished: the new beginning of Weimar and the economic crisis; first steps towards women's liberation; hope and mass unemployment, war. Weimar, according to her, was an unparalleled cultural blossoming, manifested in Nobel prizes, literature and art and above all in the feminism of the cities, in women's education and an 'image of the new woman' which has been influential up to the present day: autonomous, successful, sexually liberated, socialist. This inventory makes the question as to how it was possible for the new woman to be replaced by the Nazi-mother all the more acute. Her answer is a little too abridged: given Germany's late industrialization these women were exotic forerunners (178). The majority of the population of the country was poor, a large part was rural. Women were conservative. They saw emancipated women as an evil contributing to Germany's decline. The promise of participation in the salvation of Germany called forth a response from female reactionaries. For more liberal women there was, in addition, disappointment over the political defeat of Weimar emancipation and the struggle over scarce jobs with men coming home from the war. Given this set of conditions, the National Socialist revival was successful because it emphasized two essential elements: self-activity of the masses and anti-Communism. Koonz quotes a number of speeches, texts and slogans which unambiguously demonstrate that under National Socialism women were intended to do no more than live at a man's side, or rather, behind him, strengthening his combative spirit, keeping a warm home and bearing children for the nation. An exemplary collection of maxims could be put together from Hitler's speeches and writings, justifying the strength of the German male in terms of the woman's natural weakness and need for protection. Koonz explains the enthusiasm of millions of women for his project as due to the practical social importance now accorded the activities which they carried out anyway. To be a mother for the Fatherland, to save Germany, to put an end to want—the ideals interlocked, became synonymous with 'being a woman'. Consequently, politics, military affairs and science could be left to men, because hearth and home did not simply promise women something private but made the familiar world of the private itself a public sector. The disturbing and simultaneously convincing aspect of Koonz's book is that she demonstrates how the effectiveness of the fascist project was based on a radical division of society's total productive labour into gender-specific spheres. Household, culture, child-raising, psychology and social work on the side of women; politics, military matters, science on that of men.

The Realm of Women

Non-interference and the cultivation of difference between the sexes—these were at once a promise and a practice on the basis of which women

could erect their own realm, sufficiently free and autonomous for its explicit subordination to the male sphere not to weigh so heavily. The movement gripped housewives, white-collar workers and peasant women in all parts of the country. Koonz shows—through case-studies and from the work of four National Socialist agitators—that up to the point of the seizure of power itself, millions of women were carried along by the enthusiasm of doing something important together, without ever becoming members of the party. (The NSAPD's female membership was approximately five per cent of the total in 1932.) The author is able to establish that it was precisely the absence of a coherent women's project within the Nazi Party which gave the many agitators within the Party's area of influence the latitude and autonomy which allowed the movement to develop organically. Nevertheless, individual convictions were quite diverse, fusing atheism and Führer-cult or else God and Führer, organized Christians and women workers, traditional anti-intellectualism or a valuing of education, and so on. Common to all was the enthusiasm for a specific women's sphere, for motherhood as the feminine contribution to the national community. Women developed their own strategies (collectively buying a sewing-machine and sewing flags, or clothes for the poor); they had their own newspapers; women believed themselves to be the stable element in the masculine total 'renewal', they were the ones who 'picked up the thread of life' (71). They left politics to the men, because they had more important things to do, they fed 'the holy flame of motherhood'; at last they could call one another 'sisters' (87). 'Women's special spiritual powers', rather than equality, were to be developed (142). The proposition that women are anyway more fundamental to the community, because they live the community, whereas men are involved in egoistic competition (88), is also to be found once more in our contemporary women's movement.

Koonz gives a convincing account of the creation of a vast Nazi women's organization. It combines extensive study of sources—electoral statistics, public speeches, laws, correspondence—with close attention to tradition and culture. Guided by theory without being dogmatic, she points to the sources of individual dimensions and to the kind of soil on which they become productive. We learn in passing that a population policy which crucially honoured and rewarded mothers did not originate under National Socialism but had existed in France since 1920 as well as in Stalin's Soviet Union (149)—but at the same time she allows us to understand the peculiar mixture which became explosive in Nazism. A further important idea is that domination does not become potent in a simple relationship of cause and effect, but depends on the binding together, the coalescence, of already existing elements. 'Hitler as campaigner derived his power from his ability to mobilize people to do what they had wanted to do in the first place.' His 'art' consisted of sharpening what already existed in a way that was effective with the masses, of 'releasing their energy' (751)—what today we would call 'populism'. Koonz also presents material to show how Hitler's ideological war-leadership depended on a constant alternation between feminine and masculine dimensions of the social, in gesture, enunciation and vocabulary: the masculine will leading a weak nation, the hands of a virgin imploring heaven for help against the 'Jewish vipers', etc. She calls his mode of address 'emotional transvestism' (67).

The centre of Koonz's book is not women's hysterical enthusiasm at the sight of Hitler, a perspective familiar from many studies, but the conviction they showed in carrying out ordinary daily tasks. In her view, the commitment to motherhood could remain effective as a historical programme so long as its practical fulfilment was not itself tested on a large scale: among young people, while camping, and in the sport and health programmes for girls; in the experience of female comradeship; and in the numerous public activities of women's groups. Here she discerns the first contradiction. The traditional rural family which inspired the Nazi ideal, and in whose name the mother had become a heroine, no longer existed—indeed, its last remnants were simultaneously being eliminated by Nazi policies (178). Millions of women, men and young people engaged in public activity in order once more to propagate the family as a perspective. The glue which was supposed to hold the pieces together was the explosive blowing them apart. At the same time, the ideological foundation was fissured: expansion, especially in the armaments sector, required women in the factories. Blessed Motherhood turned into the usual hybrid as working mothers sacrificed themselves for Führer and Fatherland. In sober figures that meant that in the second half of the thirties more women were in paid employment than during the Weimar Republic, although they now almost entirely occupied subordinate positions and consistently earned only half of what men were paid for the same job (198).

After Hitler was installed in power, a struggle broke out over the women's leadership. Koonz argues that only a pragmatic woman, an obedient maid-servant who did not dispute men's authority or wish to avail herself of political power, who placed herself under the protection of a man and, above all, who had no women's programme of her own, was the only possible occupant of this position in a National Socialism which foresaw no political role for women. Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, who had come late to the Nazis and had not participated in the enthusiastic women's mobilization, was perfect for this role. Whereas the other women leaders disappeared, Scholtz-Klink remained almost unchallenged at the top, or rather on that subordinate elevation which a *Reichsfrauenführer* could attain.

Religion and the Nazi Regime

While the material is presented clearly and authoritatively up to this point, Koonz is less persuasive when she tackles the depressing question why the many independently active women not only committed themselves to being mothers for the Fatherland, but also supported the persecution of the Jews and helped carry forward the Nazis' racial policies.² The active consent of many women was required for the notification of hereditary defects, as it was for the exclusion of Jews from circles of friends and acquaintances (143 *passim*). Koonz's tenacious search for the banality of evil in women's everyday lives is certainly correct, but her theoretical explanation that what counted now was the consolidation of a good inner world against an evil outer one, sounds flat and questionable

² Cf. W.F. Haug's analyses in 'Die Faschisierung des bürgerlichen Subjekts: Die Ideologie der gesunden Normalität und die Ausrottungspolitiken im deutschen Faschismus', Argument Sonderband, West Berlin 1986.

(191). She fails to explain how in the shape of life itself, in the acceptance of the 'woman's sphere', the contradictions—here between love and hate—maintain an unstable but viable balance. Now Koonz shifts to the different and important terrain of the attitude of the churches, and especially of religious women, to National Socialism. In fact, this is just another view of the same question, since at the beginning of National Socialism approximately 95 per cent of the population were Protestant or Catholic (227). She sketches Hitler's tense relationship with organized religion, from Concordat to the attempt to unite both confessions in a single state church, and thereby gains a yardstick for judging the resistances within the church itself as a struggle for autonomy (e.g. in the shape of the Confessing Church) and not, for example, against the persecution of the Jews (231).³ According to the same pattern she demonstrates that the vast majority of Protestant women—especially their leaders—recognized their own anti-emancipatory values, as well as their anti-communism, in Nazism and, given a degree of autonomy, were willing to comply with them. (Even words like 'spiritual rebirth' and frequent reference to 'fate' were current in Protestantism.)

The potential compassion of religion had disappeared in the melting pot of a traditional scheme of values. Industrialization, modernism, women's emancipation, sexual liberation and atheism were to be brought to a halt. To the church authorities motherhood appeared to be a good and stable alternative to these threats (231). Conclusion: the Protestant Church was opportunist because it inhabited a polarity of Christian nationalism and socialist atheism (263); it never really resisted and never quite surrendered. During the course of his fight against the Protestant Church, however, Hitler's tone changed from solicitous bridegroom to killer (263).

Catholic women were more resistant to Nazism than the Protestants. Koonz assumes that the cult of the Virgin Mary gave women a strong identity and that their unconditional faith and obedience prevented their institutional networks from negotiating independently or making alliances with Nazi women's groups (267ff.). These explanations are somewhat laboured, since ultimately the contrast that Koonz draws between Catholic and Protestant women goes no further than a relative autonomy of the two groups. Even the initial demand of Catholic women, not to limit women's rights to motherhood alone, but to extend them to employment as well, is left out of account. The refusal to include racial hygiene in courses for mothers appears only once (279). According to the author, Catholic women were culturally accustomed to misogyny through Biblical tradition; their conservative values meant that their politics was not incompatible with National Socialism; but life also belonged to their values whatever suspicions there were of its genetic make-up. For all the centralism of the Church, Hitler's agreement with the Pope never led Catholic women to pursue the Nazification of their institutions. So their structure was potentially resistant to state incorporation. 'Women leaders whose lives had been dedicated to organization-building used every means at their disposal to preserve these networks, and they looked to the church hierarchy as their fortress against Nazi paganism' (280).

³ A careful analysis of the behaviour of the churches is offered by Jan Rehmann, 'Die Kirchen im NS-Staat', *Argument Sonderband*, 1986.

Nevertheless, Koonz is surprised how little either women's group had used their organizations for resistance. At the same time she suspects that women responded altogether more quickly either with resistance or at least with a sense of fear, because the reproduction policies of the Nazis directly affected women's lives. She describes the protests against a limited biological conception of motherhood and against the call from within Catholic ranks to dissolve the women's organizations. Fifty years later such passages might have been framed more convincingly if the author had more strongly emphasized the state-oriented and reactionary role of the Catholic Church in history, instead of expressing surprise that a great institution whose banners bear the word humanity has all too little to show when it is really needed. Koonz sums up finally that while each individual act of resistance was courageous, it remained relatively ineffectual and that it was precisely women's strength that was their weakness. After all, they assented to a structure which accorded them a distinct women's sphere. Resistance, when it did arise, was directed against attacks on the boundaries of this sphere, not towards society as a whole.

Forms of Resistance

In the chapters on resistance, Koonz recounts the fates of individual women: their work, at first in open groups, then underground, abroad, their arrest, their execution. Their names form a chain—women who courageously did the obvious when the obvious was outrageous, and were murdered because of it. To learn about them is heartening because they bear witness that resistance was possible; their life-stories are also horrifying and crippling because they show that resistance was impossible. Koonz turns her attention to this contradiction. She reminds us that the great institutions from which the resistance fighters came—principally Communists, but also Socialists and Catholics—did not call for organized resistance against Hitler. The Hitler-Stalin Pact and the Concordat with the Pope even tied down the enormous international power which these institutions should have had at their command. The consequence was individual heroism without strategy, creating countless martyrs.

The author examines these women's acts, about which the history books have, as usual, little or nothing to say. She searches through the court files and does indeed find fewer women than men among those sentenced (a relationship of roughly 1:5). She investigates what counted as an act of resistance. Her conclusion: because of social prejudice about their position and character, women were particularly suited to the dangerous and important work of passing on information. Their coffee parties allowed them to meet without arousing suspicion; prams and shopping bags were convenient means of transport. The view that women were above all mothers, capable of expressing warmth but not provided with great intelligence, meant that it was some time before the security organs paid any attention to them.⁴ She concludes that the women's resistance network was closer and more effective than historians describe. Besides passing on information, their work consisted of looking after people on the

⁴ The special suitability of women for underground work, precisely because of their political exclusion, is a theme explored in literary form in Brecht's *The Member*. See also Ruth Werner's *Anteilnahme an der Spinnerei: Sonjas Report*, Berlin, 1977. In her view, children provided the best cover

run and aiding escape in general. What they did seemed just as self-evident to them as the fact that they said no to Nazism at all. It was only from ex-Nazis and from so-called 'internal exiles' that she heard appeals to values, morality and an abstract ethics.

Strangely, Koonz asserts that the history of the Jews under fascism has been erased from collective memory and historical work, in contrast to the persecution of Communists and Socialists. I was a pupil at a girls' Gymnasium after the war, and the only thing we did learn about fascism was the persecution of the Jews, whereas the elimination of virtually the whole leadership of the working class was wrapped in silence. And that has always seemed to me symptomatic of the history of the construction of the Federal Republic.

The materials presented in the chapter on Jewish women—the lengthy hesitation, the disbelief among middle-class Jews at the racial decrees, and the delay before the persecutors turned their attention directly to Jewish women—are well known. Koonz indicates both the hesitations and the possibilities open to those who had enough money or sufficiently influential relatives to enable them to escape, and the fate of the nameless, who had to remain and die. She sketches some individual lives and explains that Jewish women had far less influence in a masculine world than any other group and that consequently their absence from the archives could hardly be compensated by other forms of research. Instead, an interview with an Auschwitz survivor takes the place of a more general reconstruction.

My disappointment concerns the nature of the theoretical approach, a requirement that probably does not do justice to the work of a historian. Koonz has brought the material together and presented it in a way that makes a strategic critique possible. But she does not produce this critique. She demonstrates that the great women's organizations—particularly those of the churches—failed in the face of fascism, not least because the conception and practice of culturally distinct women's spheres, with motherhood and family at their centre, suited them. She shows that the organizations of the working class failed, not only because international opposition had been blunted by the Hitler-Stalin Pact, but also because they recognized far too late the threat of a politics which did not deal in terms of class and property, but whose whole propaganda effort was directed towards the sphere of reproduction—towards the reproduction of a 'pure', 'healthy' race. This politics was oriented towards women's everyday lives; it elevated them by drawing their activities into the public sphere, and degraded them because at the same time they remained in subordinate and biologically determined areas. The elevation meant that they did not experience fascism only as a threat, and that organized resistance, the only kind which could have been successful, did not take place. In her final reflections Koonz concentrates on the peculiar role which the family played in Nazism: as the football of a politics grounded on race and gender, it was both a private space which protected individuals from public life and a field of state penetration. Here Koonz appears to be arguing for greater privateness.

If the author had included the economic sphere, or even the role of the large companies, in her account of the development of fascism, her

analysis would have pointed in another direction. Her material suggests that neglect and underestimation of the spheres occupied by women are likely to result in defeat for socialist forces if these spheres themselves become central political factors. To conceive the relationship between the sexes itself, especially in the context of the general division of labour within society, as the basis of the reproduction of domination, throws further light on the possibility and the perpetuation of fascism. The continuation of gender-specific spheres can function as a reference-system: what is absent in one area does not have to be claimed there, but can be anticipated in others and perhaps even lived in them. In this way, hopes for the society as a whole are confined within the women's spheres—a situation which 'protects' each individual man from social transformation, just as it makes each individual woman guilty, and so can secure her obedience. Koonz's feminist approach teaches us, without itself drawing such a conclusion, that women's protest against fascism would have consisted of joining together the spheres politically; the sphere of reproduction should neither be abandoned, nor merely be given public recognition. Its tasks have to be articulated in a political context and distributed as work for the whole of society irrespective of gender, but in relationship to other tasks. Every gender-specific solution shifts the relationship of the production and administration of the means of life into a kind of 'natural' tension so that in the end even the destruction of the environment, and toxins in food appear as male acts and not as the logical consequence of a mode of production which is indifferent to life itself. To relate this specific indifference to the racial policies of fascism reveals what is reactionary about the separation of the sexes as the basis for policies of domination. It makes it possible to study the specific capitalist underpinning of fascism, without thereby neglecting the question of gender.

Conclusions

What lessons can be learned from Koonz's book for the dispute about the Mothers' Manifesto? It would certainly be unreasonable to take the experience of fascism and to apply it without taking the socio-economic context into consideration. It is also questionable to cry fascism whenever mothers play a socio-political role at all. They do so in every country in which population policies become important. They also do so in religion and in the hopes of nations for a better collective life. Undoubtedly, energies promoting both stability and change are explosively condensed in the mother figure. Its confinement within the private is reactionary under any circumstances; its entry into the political is a welcome step. Koonz also teaches us that it is not individual elements but only the conjunction of several factors that is dangerous. One such conjunction was the gender-specific division of labour, its elevation in the values associated with the mother figure and the family and the promulgation of these areas as the cultural, feminine sphere—the consequence being a more or less forced renunciation of women's employment and its subordination to the male political sphere. Here, at least, the Mothers' Manifesto is unambiguous. It presents demands which, starting from needs experienced in everyday life, imply changes and upheavals in society as a whole. But there is also this withdrawal into a feminine motherly sphere, in which mothers seek to cultivate a sheltered public zone.

Not only the experience of fascism but the whole crisis-ridden history of capitalism teaches us that such a separation, upheld by the relationship between the sexes, allows energies which are resistant, and oriented towards a future community, to fizzle out internally. So instead of struggling to make public the traditional feminine sphere, we should formulate a politics which places the whole civilization model of contemporary capitalism in question. It cannot be our aim to separate off the male-based centrality of production organized for profit by a withdrawal to feminine productive activities and areas of responsibility. Rather, the time has come to review again the whole social division of labour, and as its crises come to a head, to organize it differently. The pragmatic demand for the reduction of working hours might be a starting-point, one which would at least allow us to discuss the redistribution of aggregate labour among all members of society, while simultaneously incorporating lessons learned in the women's movement and the debate on motherhood as a conscious part of our strategy. A second step would be the establishment of gender quotas for all workplaces, associations and areas of political activity. This apparently harmless and reformist demand for an equal share in society by the sexes in fact undermines all the taken-for-granted that secure domination. It is therefore a precondition for any fundamental transformation of society. And it should at last be possible to include the political, the responsibility for the social whole, in everyone's normal working time. Such a movement, drawing on the initiative of every member of society, would prevent us being stuck with a voiceless *do-it-yourself*, a situation familiar from fascism and once more of direct concern today.

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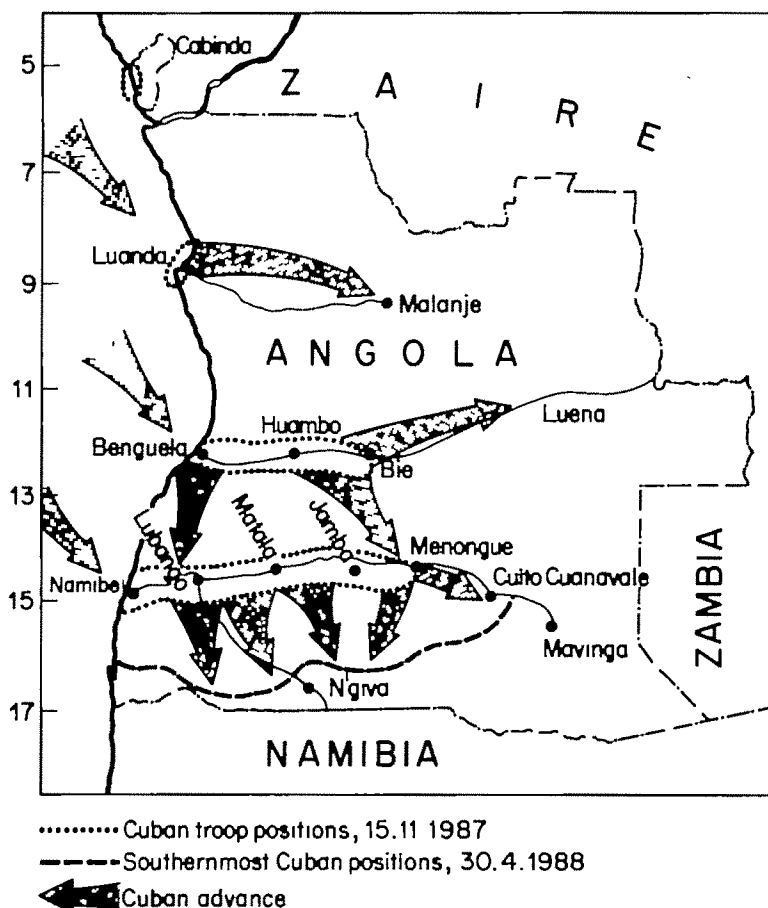
Cuba and Southern Africa

After eight months of talks in Geneva between Angola, Cuba, South Africa and the United States, 1988 is drawing to a close with the distinct possibility that Pretoria may have been forced to end ten years of procrastination and redraw its regional strategy in such a way as to allow for an independent Namibia, with a complete change in the power base of its UNITA ally in Angola. As late as the beginning of November, as the target date for the implementation of UN Resolution 435 passed, relations between the four parties had soured so dramatically that preparations for deepening regional war were underway with a massive build-up of South African troops on the Namibian border with Angola. But in the middle of November, after the Cuban and Angolan delegations had made significant concessions on the timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, the South Africans found themselves isolated from the US delegation for the first time.

For the Reagan Administration, success in the Geneva talks was one of the background elements in the campaign for the re-election of a Republican candidate in the November presidential election. State Department strategists had long believed that the long-term stability of South Africa itself could best be assured by a withdrawal from the quagmire of Namibia, and that a government headed by the independence movement SWAPO would constitute no threat to Pretoria. American officials made strenuous efforts to persuade the South African military of this analysis throughout the negotiations. Just how important for the US government was the illusion of success was revealed a month before the election with the rare briefing of the *New York Times* by the chief US negotiator, Dr Chester Crocker, who gave a studied and completely erroneous picture of virtual agreement.¹ The instant rebuttal by the chief Cuban delegate, Carlos Aldana, that 'such optimism unfortunately does not correspond with the facts', was not carried by any mainstream media—a characteristic silence with regard to the important strand in the history of Cuba's role in Angola represented by these negotiations.

Of all the foreign policy theatres in which the Reagan administration has intervened—Central America, the Middle East, Kampuchea and Afghanistan, for instance—none has been made to pay as terrible a human and political price as Southern Africa. The monetary cost of regional

¹ *New York Times*, 30 October 1988



destabilization between 1980 and 1986 is estimated at over \$30 billion. This staggering figure is twice the combined total of foreign aid received by the nine Southern African Development Coordinating Council (SADCC) countries over the same period. Much of the sabotage is never repaired and the region's infrastructure has gone into a sharp downward spiral. Not surprisingly six of the nine are among the twenty-five poorest countries in the world and their debt-service ratios range between 80 and 150 per cent. The level of human suffering is incalculable, though bare statistics give an indication that this is Dante's world: from Mozambique 800,000 have fled into neighbouring countries from the armed bandits who teach children to kill, and keep adults as naked slave porters; 200,000 children are orphaned; half a million people are displaced within Angola, and one child in four dies before their fifth birthday; a million people, or half the urban population, need urgent food and health aid according to the UN; no one has ever counted the peasant women and children mutilated by mines, probably as numerous as the legless soldiers tapping their way with crutches around the streets of every town. The decision by successive US governments not to recognize the Angolan government throughout the thirteen years since independence has ensured that Angola suffers a similar isolation from international aid as

was used to punish Vietnam for the same crime—military defeat of a US client. And the prospect of a Republican victory signalled the possible raising of that price as a newly confident Pretoria attempted to break its international isolation and to impose a very different kind of peace in Angola (with Savimbi) and in Namibia (with a client regime instead of SWAPO).

South Africa's First Defeat

The latest phase in Southern Africa's war opened with the dramatic series of military defeats inflicted on South Africa by Cuban, Angolan and SWAPO forces in the first six months of this year. On 16 November 1987, the Cuban Central Committee made the decision to reinforce its troops in Angola to counter a massive new South African commitment of infrastructure and logistics in northern Namibia, begun in March in preparation for the most ambitious offensive since 1975. That decision in Havana is likely to be seen in the future as equal in historical importance to the arrival of the first Cuban fighting contingent on 4 October 1975, which prevented South Africa (encouraged by Washington) from installing a client FNLA/UNITA government in Luanda.²

Just how much the regional situation has changed in the last year can be measured against President Fidel Castro's defiant commitment at the Non-Aligned summit in Harare in 1986 to 'remain in Angola until the end of apartheid'. At that time, morale was sinking throughout the frontline states as Pretoria escalated violence inside and outside South Africa. Thus Mozambique was living through its most desperate military crisis as Mozambique National Resistance bandits, organized by the South African Defence Force through Malawi, sought to cut the country in half and take the coastal town of Quelimane. Two months later, the acute tension with South Africa culminated in the murder of President Samora Machel in a plane crash on the border between the two countries. In Angola, FAPLA government troops had not recovered from the serious losses sustained under South African bombing at Mavinga the previous autumn; three Southern African capitals were still reeling from similar sorties flown against them during the attempt at negotiations by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group; inside South Africa itself the State of Emergency was taking an unprecedented toll of anti-apartheid organizations, and the new weapon of vigilante violence had been unleashed by the state at Crossroads; and Namibian independence was off the international agenda as Pretoria prepared its own Rhodesia-style UDL.

For the first time in the decade since independence, military leaders in the Frontline states were discussing the previously unthinkable possibility that 'the inevitable end of apartheid' was much further off than they publicly predicted. Their private consensus was that as long as the white regime was in power in Pretoria, its attempts to break its neighbours and other Frontline states would escalate to the point where more Nkomati agreements, like the one into which Mozambique had been forced in

² See Gabriel García Márquez, 'Operation Carlota', *New Left Review* 101/102, February–April 1977

1984, could become the norm. 'We are involved in a war to the death—it's them or us', said one senior official. In that context Zimbabwean and Tanzanian troops were fighting in Mozambique, but a Cuban military presence in Angola 'until the end of apartheid' was the only perceived guarantee that Pretoria would not win that life-and-death struggle. When Fidel flew from Harare to Luanda after making that speech, he was received with quite exceptional warmth and reverence, as, literally, the saviour of Angola's independence.

Last November, however, the Cubans decided that the deepening social, military and political crisis within South Africa itself, the fashion for regional detente being set in Moscow and Washington, and the passionate desire of the outgoing Reagan Administration to claim credit for a Cuban withdrawal, opened up the opportunity for the allied forces in Angola, suitably strengthened with some of Havana's finest military cadres, to make a sudden push for a precise objective. The implementation of Resolution 435 on Namibian independence need no longer await the end of apartheid but could in fact be a significant step towards it. It was a high-risk decision, not least because FAPLA was facing grave difficulties at that time. The South African offensive which started with the improvement of infrastructure in northern Namibia in April 1987 was the most ambitious operation since 1975 according to Angolan military analysts. It aimed at the capture of Cuito Cuanavale and a completely new strategic base for UNITA to attack central Angola. At the same time, FAPLA was facing myriad attacks from the estimated twenty thousand UNITA forces—well equipped by South Africa, funded by the US and increasingly trained in Morocco—and the Israeli-aided UNITA facilities in Zaire. UNITA attacks in the east and in new target areas in the north appear to have caught FAPLA ill prepared. Logistical failures too meant that some units ran short of food as well as equipment, with obvious repercussions on morale in Luanda.

The Cuban reinforcement operation in January rapidly changed the mood among the Angolan military. Cuban commanders stress that in the weeks leading up to the battle for Cuito Cuanavale in March FAPLA units played a 'heroic' role fighting alongside Cuban specialists in the area. 'The extent of the South African military crisis is more acute than has been generally understood,' said Ronnie Kasrils, a senior ANC military official, in a recent interview. 'Following the defeat at Cuito and the politically unacceptable loss of so many 19-year-old white conscripts, their acknowledged loss of superiority to the Cubans and Angolans in the air and the outclassing of many of the Armscor weapons such as the G5 (long-range artillery) which used to be considered unanswerable, the South African generals are in deep trouble—crisis really is the word.'

The Twin Crisis

Compounding the military crisis with a social one, the fighting in Angola and Namibia was clearly the issue which brought the 143 white youths to public refusal of military service this summer. In addition the revelation that the South African intelligence services have been using young white women in high-risk attempts to infiltrate the ANC has brought the undeclared war deep into hitherto immune white suburbia. It was against

this background that Pretoria went to the conference table at a London hotel in May 1988, using consummate skill in public relations and disinformation to obscure the retreat of its defeated army inside Angola. The London meeting also served as an occasion to present a new reasonable South Africa ready and waiting to give Namibia independence at last under the terms of the old UN Resolution 435. This was to be the first step in a far-reaching campaign to win international respectability for a 'reformed' apartheid regime—a campaign which, six months later, had paid off with visits by the South African leadership to six black African capitals never before (with the exception of Blantyre) prepared to receive them. For the South Africans the series of negotiating meetings in Brazzaville, Cairo, Geneva and New York introduced the image of a normal, viable interlocutor in state-to-state relations. The unfortunate visits to South Africa by the Pope and the UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar, followed by President Botha's skillful capitalization on the funeral of his close friend Franz-Josef Strauss to visit Switzerland, Portugal and the Ivory Coast, provided a badly needed series of public relations triumphs for a National Party government fearful of advances by the far-right Conservative Party, and a humiliating failure to coopt other ethnic groups, in the October elections.

From the day the first quadripartite talks began in London in May, the military situation moved even more decisively against South Africans as combined Angolan/Cuban and SWAPO units pushed south to end the de facto no-go situation in Cunene province on the border with Namibia. After several heavy engagements most of the South African forces, together with the Namibian black conscript units who sometimes fought in UNITA uniforms, retreated over the border, and Cuban engineering units working round the clock under floodlights rapidly put in place anti-aircraft weapons to protect new forward airstrips at Cahama and Xandongo.

At the same time the Angolans moved their southern military command into Lubango, unifying the command structures over Cunene and Cuando Cubango provinces. By June the South African generals knew their forces inside Angola were not only beaten but trapped. At a bilateral meeting in Brazzaville a top-level negotiating team attempted to woo the Angolans into an 'agreement between Africans' which would leave Namibia out of the picture and swop a SADF retreat from Angola for a Cuban withdrawal. A demilitarized zone along the Namibian border was proposed, and the Angolans were requested to leave the Ruacana dam area under South African occupation. For the first time the informal proposal surfaced that ANC bases be removed from Angola in return for a cessation of SADF support for UNITA. However, this whole attempt to re-run the scenario of the 1984 Nkomati accord with Mozambique foundered on the fact that this time it was South Africa that was facing military crisis.

In the subsequent rounds of four-party talks the South Africans made one more attempt, in Cairo, to play the dominant role. They demanded a Cuban pull-out from Angola over the same seven-month period that Resolution 435 provides for a South African military withdrawal from Namibia. The US delegation led by Dr Chester Crocker was obliged to

rewrite its allies' proposal in order to prevent the collapse of the negotiations

Crocker's adroit and inaccurate briefings—to the effect that the Cairo compromise was obtained through Soviet pressure on the Cuban and Angolan delegations—masked for most of the mainstream press the fact that Pretoria, while trying to sabotage the real content of the negotiations, could not afford to let them fail too soon with SADF units at the mercy of the Cubans inside Angola. Indeed, Crocker's successful attempt to portray a replay of Afghanistan in Angola was useful in George Bush's election campaign as it reinforced the image of a Washington-mediated superpower relationship dominating regional conflicts. The Western media's slavish following of such guidance was effectively buttressed by some less than sophisticated briefings from Moscow sources made fashionable by glasnost. 'Russians Seek Deal in Africa: Textbooks of Revolution Give Way to a Search for Peaceful Solutions' (*Observer*, 25 September 1988) was a classic presentation of the supposed 'major policy revamp' by the USSR. In the same article by the influential South African journalist Alistair Sparks, a senior member of the Moscow Institute for African Studies, Yevgeny Tarabrin, was quoted as grossly insulting the Angolan military, and as completely failing to understand the role of Jonas Savimbi in the South African and US attempt to alter the political options of the Angolan government. In the context of numerous Soviet faux pas in international seminars and other fora, many jumped to the conclusion that a withdrawal of Soviet support was underway. In fact, such Soviet intellectuals were clearly poorly informed about the substantial Soviet re-supply operations which supported the Cuban/Angolan military offensive. To have been better informed they need have gone no further than to watch some videos from Cuban television, which in the first ten months of 1988 reported more about the Cuban engagement than in the previous ten years.

Washington's Role

US military and political support for Savimbi was demonstrated by his visit to the United States during the period of negotiations, and by the joint US/ Zairean military manoeuvres which equipped UNITA's northern bases in case Namibian independence forced it to give up Jamba in the south. Despite these ostentatious displays, however, the United States managed to score a public relations triumph as mediator in the conflict, and its vital role in support of South Africa was simply left out of the picture. (More astonishing still, the Angolans chose to state publicly that US support for UNITA was not on the table at the ongoing negotiations. It was in fact one part of the hidden agenda which stalled the talks in October.) There seems little doubt that the Cubans could have hit the retreating South African forces much harder than they did, causing many more casualties. The choice not to do so fits into a pattern of almost exaggerated politeness on the Cuban/Angolan side. 'The Cubans calculated that a public humiliation of the South Africans would be too much for Washington to swallow, the right would have been screaming about the communist threat to the region. So they gave Crocker all the public relations points he wanted', said one Frontline States' official after a briefing from Fidel in Havana.

Between July and November, the negotiations at Geneva, Brazzaville and New York showed the Angolan/Cuban delegation to be flexible and conciliatory, and ready for considerable telescoping of the original four-year withdrawal proposal down to twenty-seven months. This attitude, together with Washington's anxiety for the beginning of a settlement on Cuban withdrawal before the November elections, pushed the South Africans to the point where it became difficult for them to draw back from the 435 process. UN officials began to arrive in Windhoek in early October, and a decision was reached on the composition of the proposed 7,000-strong UN monitoring force for the independence process.

It soon became clear, however, that the UN arrival was premature as hard bargaining developed on issues that had been implied but not spelt out in the 14-point draft agreed at the New York meeting in August—particularly on the ending of South African and US aid to Savimbi. For South Africa's generals and their friends in Washington, it would be a serious defeat—as important as the retreat from Namibia—to give up their most useful regional policy tool. And the mooted quid pro quo of a closure of ANC bases in Angola would be a cheap price for the Angolan government and its allies to pay. Again Pretoria's attempt to replay Nkomati with the undertone of defeat for the ANC could convince only its own constituency. The ANC could train its guerrilla army in at least four African countries that would be in some ways easier to work in than Angola.

Even if Namibian independence is not, after all, won by a combination of some of these compromises, the new political era opened by the first military defeat for South Africa will affect the internal political situation for both Angola and South Africa as dramatically as that of Namibia itself. Nor will anyone in the region soon forget the lesson that Cuba's military actions and readiness for sacrifice changed the balance of power as years of Western diplomacy could not. The democratic movement within South Africa has been indelibly marked by the experience. And in Angola the action has strengthened a second generation who have now fought and won battles against the South African army and Washington's UNITA proxies as decisive as those of the liberation war against Portuguese fascism.

As the year ends, the Cuban military presence in southern Angola remains the most important factor in the outcome of the negotiations. Pretoria is faced with extremely awkward choices. Firstly, it could use its troops massed on the Namibian border to re-enter Angola and take on the Cubans—a politically impossible course that would involve high casualties. Secondly, it could accept Resolution 435 and leave Namibia in order to get the Cubans out of the region. Such a strategic volte-face, in which the implications of defeat would be impossible to disguise, would have incalculable political consequences at home, both in the confidence it would ignite in the black community and in the setback for the morale of many whites. The third possibility, now that the SADF forces have been safely extricated from Angola, is simply to let the negotiations drop. This would mean accepting the prospect of an indefinite Cuban presence on the Namibian border and a continuation of both the war with SWAPO and the UNITA war in Angola, on much less favourable terms than in the past. Besides, change in the military situation, which has given SWAPO an

improved rear base and logistic network some two hundred kilometres nearer the Namibian border, would make possible large-scale guerrilla operations inside Namibia and again begin to have unacceptable political costs inside South Africa. Internationally too this would be a costly option, since even Pretoria's US allies are increasingly turning their attention to internal solutions to the South African crisis, such as the drawing up of a federal constitution, which depend on having a 'moderate' Nationalist government to promote.

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comment

Russell Jacoby

The Last Intellectuals: a Reply to Lynn Garafola

Stray phrases are sometimes more revealing than central points. Lynn Garafola in her intemperate review of my book calls me a 'self-proclaimed leftist'. What she means is that I have not been licensed by her circles that deliver the official proclamations. She is incensed because I lack respect for their rituals and successes like *New Yorker* notice. In her list of public intellectuals I have failed to acknowledge, she includes *October* editor Rosalind Krauss, 'an art critic so well-known that a *New Yorker* profile (on someone else) opened with a description of her living room'. I like that, but I'm a little puzzled by the reasoning. Is it Krauss's living room that makes her a public intellectual? Or Janet Malcolm's description of it in the *New Yorker*? Or both?

Garafola, a self-proclaimed critic, tries to deck me with an argument and her personal Rolodex. She believes that history is a one-way street of progress and revolution. Anyone who reflects on what might be lost is guilty of romanticism and nostalgia; I want to 'turn back the clock' while she embraces a glorious future. She has learned that material conditions determine cultural life. To reflect on possibilities and pressures is to blame the victim. Might (aging) new left professors be wanting in some respect? They are victims of older intellectuals and a hostile world. The abattoir of history is an American campus; the victims are university professors. Their plight is tragic; their efforts heroic.

I stated in my preface: 'My friends, generation, and self are not the heroes—or victims. I prize a younger left intelligentsia that I believe has surrendered too much. I take as a measuring rod an older generation of intellectuals whose work I often criticize' (pp. xii–xiii). This inflames many reviewers who require unadulterated praise or condemnation. What? Younger intellectuals are not heroes? And older intellectuals have estimable qualities? Garafola writes that I want 'an intelligentsia in the image of the New York intellectuals' and she scorns my endless 'romance' for the Sidney Hooks, Norman Podhoretz, Lionel Trillings. What book did she read? My chapter 'New York, Jewish and Other Intellectuals' directly tackles the New York group, and questions their contribution and radicalism. I ponder why so many of the New York Jewish intellectuals 'hastily beat a retreat' from radicalism (pp. 85–96). I expressly take issue with their inflated reputations (pp. 100–06). Trilling's writings are 'casual and familiar'; Hook has produced no original or coherent

philosophical work. For all the hoopla, the New York intellectuals are not theoretically impressive. This does not fit into Garafola's cardboard world, she can't figure it out. If you criticize younger thinkers, you must idolize older ones. You are either for us—younger, bright, hip New York writers—or against us. She states that I 'blame the New Left for the demise of American intellectual life'. She means: I do not simply celebrate younger left thinkers

I evaluate public intellectual life, circumscribing my argument in several ways. With a generational grid, I survey younger thinkers born since 1940 who are products of American experience and schools; I also explicitly confine myself to writers of non-fiction—social, political and economic thinkers. I state emphatically that it is hardly a question of blame or personal qualities. 'The proposition of a missing generation does not malign individuals. It is not a statement about personal integrity or genius' (p. 4). None of this matters to Garafola; she reads critical analysis as a poison-pen letter. She might argue that my generational categories make no sense or that I should not restrict myself to non-fiction. She doesn't bother.

Excluding novelists, visual artists, poets I see few younger social and political intellectuals with a public profile. Garafola counters with a list that begins, presumably, with her strongest candidate. She asks us first to 'consider Martin Duberman'. A professor, he writes drama, cultural history, biography and a weekly newspaper column. Here is a younger public intellectual! That's very nice, but Martin Duberman, almost 60 (b. 1930), is hardly a young intellectual. Americans are forever youthful, but this seems extreme.

Next she nominates Edward Said. I think a reasonable case can be made for Said as a younger public intellectual, though at 53 (b. 1935) like Christopher Lasch (b. 1932) he may be classified more accurately as part of a transitional generation. Thoughtfully her third candidate is her husband (and Said's Columbia University colleague) Eric Foner, an author of 'widely read volumes integrating the "new history" within a radical framework'. Then she proposes black women novelists, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. To be sure, superb, but I expressly exclude novelists. And that brings us back to Rosalind Krauss and her living room. As her best shots, these miss the building.

Her second tier are names culled from her address book: Richard Kostelanetz, Barbara Ehrenreich, Mike Davis, Elizabeth Kendall, Paul Buhle, etc. etc. I am pleased she has so many friends, but it does not add up. I am looking for a generational presence, a series of compelling public thinkers. Can she seriously believe that the indefatigable Richard Kostelanetz, poet, essayist, artist-of-all-trades, and self-promoter, is a public intellectual, 'highly visible' in her terms? Again I must emphasize: my conclusions are not judgements on the value of these people's contribution, but on the relationship to a larger public culture. For instance, I also think Paul Buhle writes stimulating essays and books, and yes, he founded *Radical America* and *Cultural Correspondence* (two marginal outfits). Does that make him a public intellectual? I don't think so—which is also different from blaming him. Ditto for Mike Davis, and others she suggests.

Even the most talented and most independent cannot flourish in an environment with little place for independence and talent.

It would be offensive to run over her list and quickly categorize the work of many individuals. The point is: once those excluded by my categories are left aside her nominations hardly refute my argument. I have no reason to pretend things are cut and dry; there is room for argument. A good case can be made for Barbara Ehrenreich as a younger public intellectual. Nevertheless my book does not rest on several individuals, but on generalizations about intellectual life. It is not a question of this or that writer, but the wider cultural geography.

Not only do I miss the individuals, I also miss the key journals: *Performing Arts Journal*, *The Drama Review*, *The Advocate*, *Signs*, *October*, *Cineaste*, *Art in America*, *Raritan*, etc. etc. This won't wash. These journals have not—or not yet—been vehicles for younger intellectuals moving from specialized to larger publics, at least judging from her nominations. The issue is not the vitality of these periodicals; rather even those trying to be accessible like *In These Times* have not spawned a younger public group. She is pleased that several of her favourite journals attend to 'culture and gender', reflecting the '60s counter-culture. Splendid, but for my argument this is neither here nor there. *Signs* may take up women in culture, film, revolution or astrology; it is still an academic journal.

Garafola doesn't want a critique of cultural life; she wants praise for her friends, and a circle of not-so-young left thinkers. They are heroes and victims. If they have flaws, vulgar psychology and Marxism tell us why: bad parents and a bad environment. Criticism beyond that smacks of disloyalty; hence I am 'a self-proclaimed leftist', an outsider lacking awe for the 'new methodologies', the 'sea-change' in left thought and other shining advances. Her review reeks of the affronted self-regard of a coterie. I regret that she failed to address the real issues; I also look forward to reading about her living room in a *New Yorker* profile (on someone else).

* * * * *

LYNN GARAPOLA REPLIES: Russell Jacoby's tirade exemplifies all the worst qualities of his book: *ad hominem* attacks, a refusal to engage with ideas, and an outdated definition of intellectual life. Presented with criticism, he simply reiterates in a similar tone the misconceptions and personal prejudices that make up much of his book.

With regard to my Roladex, alas I have never met many of the intellectuals I mention. Jacoby, however, knows more about promoting a 'coterie' than I do. Only friendship with members of the *Tales* editorial board can explain one of his loonier notions—that this obscurantist journal is a model of intellectual writing for a broad public. Jacoby's main problem is that he mistakes a change in intellectual life for an absence of intellectual life. Since the 1960s this has come to centre not only on literature and the social sciences but on the visual and performing arts, popular culture, and the mass media. At the same time, insights drawn from the study of race and gender and various post-structuralist methodologies have transformed the content of intellectual writing and the questions behind it. By

confining himself to 'social, political and economic thinkers', Jacoby simply defines contemporary intellectual life out of existence. This is no substitute for thoughtful analysis.

Of course, the exclusion of creative artists is highly debatable in a book whose subtitle is 'American Culture in the Age of Academe'. Jacoby chides me for mentioning Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, but the novelist Gore Vidal keeps popping up in Jacoby's pages, and he is not above marshalling evidence, when it suits his purpose, from poets and fiction writers linked to the New York intellectuals.

Jacoby objects to my calling him a 'self-proclaimed leftist'. Actually, I was giving him the benefit of the doubt. A political chameleon, Jacoby changes colour with his audience. In *New Left Review* he trumpets his criticism of Lionel Trilling and the New York intellectuals. But only last spring, at a National Endowment of the Humanities conference on the state of the humanities, Jacoby and neo-conservative ideologue Gertrude Himmelfarb found themselves on the same side, decrying the absence of scholarship that speaks to a broad public. 'I don't see the Edmund Wilsons and Lionel Trillings', said Jacoby.¹ Note, he didn't ask where are the Paul Sweezys or C. Wright Millses. But that wouldn't go down well in today's Washington.

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A range of states across the third world are passing through an uncertain and contested transition from dictatorship to semi-democratic or liberal regimes. The popular thirst for democracy cannot be doubted, but equally neither should the tenacity and resourcefulness of ruling power elites be underestimated. In NLR 169 Benedict Anderson studied the perdurance of 'cacique democracy' in the Philippines, while in NLR 172 James Petras argued that the regime of accumulation established by the Chilean military is still bidding to determine the limits of the possible in an era of controlled liberalization. In Pakistan Benazir Bhutto has been elected prime minister but no pretence is made that her government actually controls the military apparatus. In this issue Bruce Cumings compares and contrasts the democratization process in Latin America with the introduction of elective procedures into the ruling order of South Korea. While saluting the social courage of those students and workers who helped push back Seoul's dictatorial system in 1987-88 Cumings also considers structural factors permitting this outcome. In a suggestive and wide-ranging survey Cumings situates recent attempts to understand third world democratization on the theoretical terrain of Marxist and non-Marxist accounts of the revolutionary origins of capitalist democracy in Europe and North America. He shows how the clash of revolution and counter-revolution in Korea in 1945-53 effectively eliminated the pre-capitalist landlord class in the South as well as the North. He also explores the way in which the ROK's formidable configuration of military and economic power remains subordinate to US hegemony and complementary to Japan's regional posture. For Cumings the impetus to democratization remains hobbled by systemic constraints, and has strength only to the extent that a democratic opening is better adapted than dictatorship to handling the awakened social forces of a crisis period in a more developed capitalist social formation.

One of the crucial experiences for any comparative discussion of 'abertura' is the Brazilian transition from military dictatorship, and we hope shortly to follow Emir Sader's article on the Workers Party (NLR 165) with an extensive political survey of Brazil. In this issue Cynthia Sarti continues our series on women's movements with an absorbing account of the

fate of contemporary feminism in Brazil. Originating in the mid seventies, in a period marked by the heightening of democratic struggle, feminist groups initially collaborated with an older tradition of women's neighbourhood and occupational associations to build a powerful movement for creches. The opening of new political space in the past decade, however, has led to a certain fragmentation of the movement—a process which has quite distinctive aspects but will nevertheless appear familiar to many readers in Europe and North America.

For the mass media in the West, it is above all the ecological devastation of Amazonia, with its increasingly evident implications for the planet, which has put Brazil firmly 'on the map'. What is often forgotten is that the region itself has a long and complex social history. In an interview with Alexander Cockburn and an accompanying article, Susanna Hecht draws on her wide professional experience of the Brazilian Amazon to explain the nature of the impending disaster and to show how a government-backed fever of land-grabbing and speculation has stripped vast areas of soil for no rational long-term benefit. The old system of debt peonage, regarded by many as the most oppressive form of labour exploitation, has finally lost its grip. But last December the ancestral class savagery of Brazilian landowners burst out once more in the contract-murder of the Acre rubber tappers' leader, Chico Mendes—a man adopted by international environmentalist organizations for his contribution to the defence of the rain-forest. The life and death of Mendes, as told by Susanna Hecht, are an unusually clear demonstration that ecological issues can and must be fused with the struggles of real social forces in the region under threat.

Brazil is also the country of origin of Roberto Mangabeira Unger, who published in 1987 three volumes of his still uncompleted magnum opus 'Politics, a Work in Constructive Theory'. Basing itself upon a philosophical anthropology, a theory of formative context in history and a genealogy of the modern world, Unger's enterprise is essentially conceived as a radical political alternative both to Marxism and to social democracy. Perry Anderson here weighs the theoretical claims of Unger's work and critically examines the main lines of its programmatic agenda.

The death last November of Erich Fried has removed one of the last major links with the inter-war generation of left-wing socialists in Germany and Austria. Although Fried settled in London for nearly all his

adult life, his reputation and influence as an outstanding poet, novelist and essayist remained highest in Germany, and had indeed been steadily growing in the decade since the formation of the Greens. In a conversation with Stuart Hood, recorded a year before his death, Fried reviews a life lived in the fullest tension with the events of the century, beginning with the unforgettable memory of Bloody Friday in Vienna when he was just six years of age.

Verso/New Left Books will shortly be publishing a collection of Eric Hobsbawm's political writings from the period since his 'Forward March of Labour Halted?' first appeared in 1978. In the article we are printing here—the text of a lecture delivered at a meeting to commemorate 125 years of the SPD in Bonn in 1988—Hobsbawm looks back over the history of the Socialist and Communist parties, both suggesting a decline of the class consciousness on which they were traditionally based and noting the continuing strength of their presence within the political arenas of the West.

Michael Rustin's article in NLR 131, 'A Socialist Consideration of Kleinian Psychoanalysis', proposed an ambitious reconciliation of socialist theory with the object-relations tradition within psychoanalysis. Seven years later, Rustin takes stock of the Thatcherite erosion of the welfare-state context in which the Kleinian School developed, and situates the work of Wilfred Bion and other post-Kleinians within the changing ideological climate in Britain. For those on the Left who believe that psychoanalysis can be integrated into a renewal of the socialist project, Bion's insights will represent a fascinating challenge.

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The Abortive Abertura: South Korea in the Light of Latin American Experience

I wish in this essay to peer through the Latin American looking glass, or *abertura*, to see what light may be shed on the ongoing struggle to democratize the South Korean political system. In Latin America the richest literature on the problems and prospects of democratization emerged along with a more successful decompression of authoritarian regimes (with exceptions, like Chile) than has yet occurred in Korea or Taiwan. So, it is a literature that may hold comparative insights for East Asia. Moreover, the Latin American field has been a model of world theory merging with home-grown theory and practice, each influencing the other. This is a relief to someone from a field whose leading lights describe the economic prowess of the people they study as miraculous (that is, unbelievable) and who find episodic democratization equally odd, and worthy of yet more self-revelatory genuflection. I will first assess the rise and apparent demise of the Latin American dictatorships, then question the diagnosis and cure suggested by several prominent Latin Americanists, and finally proffer an alternative explanation that I think illuminates both the Korean and Latin American cases.

Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism

It is worth recalling that the most powerful explanation of the serial emergence of authoritarian systems in Latin America, Guillermo O'Donnell's analysis of bureaucratic-authoritarianism, posited an interacting pattern of world system, world time, industrialization strategies, and domestic political coalitions and regime types. The bureaucratic-authoritarian system arose, so O'Donnell argues, in sequence with the exhaustion of import-substitution industrialization (ISI), vertical 'deepening' of industrialization (in intermediate and capital goods), and the onset of export-led development; thus ended the populist and nationalist phase identified with the Perón and Vargas regimes in Argentina and Brazil. Industrialization strategies prompted by what Albert Hirschman called 'late-late' development had the political consequence of authoritarian rule, rather than the democratization that previous analysts in the modernization school had predicted.¹

The bureaucratic-authoritarian regime combined the following characteristics: a social base in 'a highly oligopolized and transnationalized bourgeoisie'; decisive weight given to a transnational stratum of experts in metropolitan economic orthodoxy and specialists in coercion; absence through liquidation of the institutions of democracy and various channels for the representation of heterogeneous interests; exclusion of the popular sector, especially the working class; economic exclusion of small and medium business; transnationalization of the economy; denationalization of society.

South Korean authoritarianism (or what I have called its bureaucratic-authoritarian industrializing regime) shared many similarities with the recent Latin American experience. In my view the period of military rule in 1961-63 coincided with a state-led transition from ISI to export-led development, and the elaboration of a formal authoritarian system (the 'Yushin' regime, 1972-79, and 1980-87 in Chun Doo Hwan's guise) coincided with a profound industrial deepening. If O'Donnell's model does not work in Latin America save Argentina, as some critics say, it seems to do so in Korea.

The international or security dimension made a difference in the Korean case, as Park Chung Hee inaugurated heavy industrialization (steel, petrochemicals, automobiles, shipbuilding) and developed his authoritarian system in the context of the sharp changes occasioned by Nixon's opening to China and his 'New Economic Policy' toward Japan, both unveiled in August 1971. Nixon's combination of incipient US neo-mercantilism, corresponding imperial inattention to industrial deepening, indulgence for authoritarianism (both the Philippines and Korea 'went authoritarian' within weeks of each other in 1972), 'Nixon doctrine' reliance on regional gendarmes, and shrewd pursuit of detente with Russia and China provided both the goad and the space for Park's actions. I would not want to guess whether the external or internal

¹ Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, Berkeley 1973. See also his essay in David Collier, ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*, Princeton 1979.

dimension was more important; my argument would be that the requisites of industrial deepening and the dramatic changes in the external environment combined to convince the organically neo-mercantilist Park and his advisers to erect a formal bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. This regime was the political consequence of timing and sequence in industrialization, and the requisites of 'late-late' development in the 1970s. It was comparable in important ways to the Brazilian case, especially during its growth spurts (1968-74) and its 'deepening' (1974-78).²

The South Korean pattern also shows a cycle between harsh coercion and relaxation. ISI in the 1950s under a diffuse authoritarian regime was followed by the political liberalization of 1960-61; then the transition to export-led development occurred under direct junta rule (1961-63); this was followed by another relatively liberalized regime (1963-71). Industrial deepening coincided with a formal bureaucratic-authoritarian industrializing regime, which ended in crisis (1972-79); this was followed by economic liberalization under American pressure in the early 1980s, which may have correspondence to the political liberalization of 1985-88.

South Korea is similar to Latin America also in that its regime seems unable to solve 'three major challenges'.³ First, the bureaucratic-authoritarian industrializing regime had continuous problems of legitimacy,⁴ and sought to resolve them, like Brazil, through prowess in economic development (something that worked for Park but not for Chun). The second challenge, that of Presidential succession, seems to have been solved in 1988, unless one realizes that the new President, Roh Tae Woo, was a co-coup-maker in 1980 and that what is now taking place is less a 'succession' than a renovation. In any case the regime's preferred method of appointive, or anointed, succession touched off a massive popular uprising in June 1987. The third challenge: the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes have enormous difficulties in resolving crises, and 'usually end abruptly or convulsively'. This was certainly true of Park's regime in 1979, and I think it was also true of Chun's in 1987, except that as it ended it revived, and continues in place today.

The circumstances in which the Park and Chun regimes fell, or entered into crisis, bear remarkable comparison to the Latin American cases—especially Argentina. O'Donnell and Schmitter's recent, eloquent description of 'the explosion of a highly repoliticized and angry society' fits the Korean case perfectly, and I will simply quote their list of coordinates:⁵

² Serra, in Collier, ed., op. cit., pp. 142, 151; Cardoso, in O'Donnell/Schmitter/Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Washington 1986; Bruce Cumings, *Industrial Baboon: The Northeast Asian Political Economy in the 20th Century*, forthcoming.

³ O'Donnell, in Kevin J. Middlebrook and Carlos Rico, eds., *The United States and Latin America in the 1980s*, Pittsburgh 1986, p. 356.

⁴ I agree, however, with Adam Przeworski's apt critique of the way in which the problem of loss of legitimacy is typically posed. He notes that a totally illegitimate but highly coercive regime may elicit acquiescent behaviour from its people, and that illegitimate but coercive regimes only collapse when some clear alternative is visible. See his contribution to *Transitions*, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

⁵ O'Donnell/Schmitter, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, Washington 1986, p. 49.

the resurgence of previous political parties or the formation of new ones to press for more explicit democratization or even revolution; the sudden appearance of books and magazines long suppressed by censorship; the conversion of older institutions, such as trade unions, professional associations, and universities from agents of governmental control into instruments for the expression of interests, ideals, and rage against the regime; the emergence of grass-roots organizations articulating demands long repressed or ignored by authoritarian rule; the expression of ethical concerns by religious and spiritual groups previously noted for their prudent accommodation to the authorities.

As the authors note, human rights organizations and churches have been critical sanctuaries for dissidents, with the former relying on international support and the latter often being the only institution relatively immune from regime intrusion. (Some of the Christian churches of Korea have been remarkable examples of courageous witness, and a Catholic father played a catalytic role in the uprising in June 1987, refusing to expel—or allow to be expelled—students who had barricaded themselves in his sanctuary.⁶) Intellectuals and students are particularly important in such struggles, and carry much greater weight in Latin America and East Asia than in the United States. Indeed Korean students draw on old well-springs of automatic respect for the educated, and expectations that they will play an exemplary moral role.

The US role in South Korea has also been strikingly similar to that in Latin America: coddling the junta or the authoritarians as long as they seem firmly in the saddle, supporting them with military aid, police training, intelligence sharing, CIA 'advisers', etc. All this is then abruptly forgotten in regime crises—whence the US becomes champion of democracy, inaugurating a 'vain search for "respectable" elements within the authoritarian regime to ally with a democratic centre that the regime has made every effort to erase'.⁷ Washington found its 'moderate' in Roh Tae Woo, who in the fall of 1987 was welcomed to an Embassy party in Washington by Generals John Singlaub and Richard Stilwell—the former, a man with a CIA and military background in Korea, and more recently the champion of 'private' Contra funding; the latter, CIA chief for Asia at the time of the Korean War, and an early clandestine organizer of the Nicaraguan 'Contras' (in 1981).

For those who have need of a schematic overview of postwar South Korean regimes, I offer Table One as a guide. Two observations grow out of this schema: first, South Korea has had considerable experience with a representative democratic form, in 1948–61 and 1963–71; it is only in the chimeras of Reagan administration publicity that the Roh Tae Woo regime can be seen as unprecedented and exceptional.⁸ Second, this same

⁶ Korean Christian Social Research Center, *Yunul mingukhoe tae l'nyong* [The Great June (1987) Struggle for Democratization], Seoul 1987.

⁷ O'Donnell in Middlebrook and Rico, op. cit., pp. 356–57.

⁸ George Shultz visited Seoul in the midst of the popular uprising in June 1987, urged 'restraint' on all parties, and remarked that Korea, unlike the Philippines, did not have a 'tradition of democracy'. Instead, 'They have a kind of tradition of confrontation rather than compromise. It's sort of part of the Korean character' (*New York Times*, 28 June 1987). Lately both Reagan and Shultz have been lauding the 'miracle' born of the December 1987 elections.

Table One: South Korean Political System

<i>regime</i>	<i>liberal formalism</i>	<i>authoritarianism substance</i>	<i>elections*</i>	<i>economic policy</i>	<i>political disorder</i>
US military government (1945-48)	low	high	no	aid dole	very high
Rhee, 1948-60	high	high	yes	ISI, aid dole	high
Chang, 1960-61	high	low	yes	aid dole	high
junta, 1961-63	absent	high	no	ISI transition	low
Park, 1963-71	high	medium	yes	export-led	low
Park, 1972-79	low	high	no	export led/ deepening	high
Chun, 1980-84	low	high	no	export-led	medium
Chun, 1985-87	medium	high	no	export-led	high
Roh, 1988-	medium	??	yes	export-led	??

* direct elections for president

form has coexisted with coercive structures detailed below, and they still exist today with no imminent sign of being dismantled (which is not to say that major democratic gains have not occurred since 1985).

The South Korean Difference

In spite of the foregoing similarities with Latin America, there are also important differences. O'Donnell's taxonomy of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state has a close fit to South Korea, as does Martin's tabulation of the characteristics of Brazil's regime,⁹ but there is more to be said. First, the South Korean bureaucratic-authoritarian industrializing regime has a *coercive capacity* beyond the imagination of any South American state or leader. In essence this state is comparable to the 1930s Japanese model with its militarist and quasi-fascist baggage, distended and engorged by ceaseless struggle with the Korean revolution (first at home, then north of the DMZ, now at home again in a new form and a new generation).

A centrally coordinated national police, analogous to Spain's *guardia civil* under Franco, with self-contained communications, transportation and weaponry (including a large counter-guerrilla 'combat police' at the outset) has existed since 1945, a direct inheritance from Japanese colonialism via American Occupation midwifery.¹⁰ The military arm of the regime, six hundred thousand strong, is developed vastly beyond any Latin American comparison, ranking sixth or seventh largest in the world since the Korean War and having one of the highest civilian-military ratios. This military also originated in 1945, although less directly from Japanese colonialism. (The entire commanding staff at the time of the Korean War did service in the Japanese imperial army, however, and both Park Chung Hee and his eventual assassin, Kim Chae-gyu, were officers in the Japanese army who joined the South Korean army under American occupation auspices in 1946.)

A central intelligence agency (KCIA), founded in 1961 with American CIA help, gradually extended into every arena of Korean life. Korean political scientist Jang Jip Choi terms it 'the supreme state agency',¹¹ and in the Park era it had important functions in the US as well, memorialized in the 'Koreagate' scandal. It was temporarily in disarray after its chief shot President Park over dinner one night in 1979. (Barking out 'How can we conduct politics with an insect like this?', Kim Chae-gyu blasted Park's no-neck bodyguard, Cha Chi-ch'ol, and then inexplicably—for no one has ever explained it—perforated the President himself.) The KCIA revived under a different name in the Chun regime. If it is not quite as ubiquitous as in the 1970s, that is because Chun came out of the military intelligence apparatus, and correspondingly expanded its function in the 1980s. He

⁹ In O'Donnell/Schmitter/Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, Washington 1986, pp. 77–78.

¹⁰ See Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1, Princeton 1981, chapter five.

¹¹ Part of the KCIA's purpose was 'to mobilize civilian sectors as well as to coordinate the functions of diverse state agencies, thereby orchestrating all the social sectors and resources in both the state sector and civil society' Jang Jip Choi, 'Political Cleavages and Transition in a Military Authoritarian Regime: Institutionalization, Opposition and Process in South Korea: 1972–1986', November 1986, unpublished.

has also undertaken a vast expansion of a paramilitary riot police, now numbering about 150,000. They bear the main brunt of demonstrations, and are the Darth Vader-like figures that show up in photos in the *New York Times*, often with no accompanying article (for none is needed). Actually most of them are young conscripts, not much different from the students they confront.

To take but one example of the functioning of this system, a Dean of Students that I know at a major Korean university reported daily or weekly to seven different agents—police, KCIA, military intelligence, city government, local government, etc.; they would frequently call him in the middle of the night about protesting students. The system extends down to neighbourhood governments and individual families—who will always be visited if a student demonstrates, or will be shunned as 'Red' if the student is a radical. Academic freedom has been non-existent or precarious since 1948, and a profound tendency toward totalitarianism in thought is still evident. Textbooks are centrally vetted through the Ministry of Education, with careful attention to historical and political line, and to censorship of unpleasant realities. Teachers are given the responsibility to inculcate anti-communism from the grade-school level. Young people who demonstrate must go against this entire system, and against the deep-running and still potent demands of an ancient custom of filial piety.

Unlike in Latin America, the state has always been *exclusionary*: no free and independent labour unions have existed for long in South Korea, and no ruling political party or coalition has been based in labour. When such an organization has reared its head, the state has destroyed it. Thus, strong unions emerged after the liberation from Japan in 1945, as Left-oriented labour leaders organized most factories and even took many of them over. American Occupation authorities mounted a sustained three-year assault on these unions, replacing their national organization with a state-controlled 'union' designed mostly for labour control at the point of production.² No populist inclusion characterized the ISI phase in the 1950s. Until recently labour also found the opposition a weak reed, barely less hostile than the central state to combination in the workplace.

The Collapse of Landlordism

The opposition has a landed background, but one very different from Latin America. The issue of 'land reform' is vexed in the Korean case, and broadly misunderstood. Korea had a centuries-old landlord class that persisted through Japanese colonialism—indeed, the colonizers rooted lords to the land more firmly, to extract rice and keep peasants quiet. Landlordism was particularly backward-looking, non-entrepreneurial, and accordingly more *Catonist*.³

This was intensive rice-based landlordism, however, never approaching an extensive plantation pattern. The Americans pushed for land redistribution in the late 1940s, selling off Japanese-held land (about

² See Cumings, *op. cit.* (1981).

³ *Ibid.* On *Catonism* see Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston 1966, pp. 491–96.

twenty per cent of the arable total) in small bundles to tenants in 1948 at the end of the Occupation, and urging a land reform act on the Republic of Korea. A law was passed, but not one hectare was redistributed before the North Koreans occupied the South in the summer of 1950: whence came a revolutionary dispossession in all but the 'Pusan perimeter' holding area. After Rhee clamoured back to Seoul, the Americans refused to resituate his herd of lords on the land. Thus redistribution created a vast mass of small-holding peasants and quieted the countryside, while landlords received state bonds convertible to industrial wealth. Basically the Americans were trying to fashion industrialist silk purses out of agrarian sow's ears—part of the capitalist class-making in which they have engaged throughout the Third World. But rarely have they been helped by the revolution they sought to deny, as in Korea.¹⁴

War and revolution, by clearing the agrarian sector, eliminated the strong social check on central rule that derives from the oligarchies and latifundia of Latin America and, say, the Philippines. Park Chung Hee soon romped into this vacuum of power as a son of good peasant stock, and in Bonapartist fashion lassoed the peasantry for two decades. This experience and the devastation of the war also went far to create the relatively even material distribution that obtained at the onset of export-led industrialization, but the pronounced hierarchy and class awareness that was the residue of millennia of aristocratic rule remained in place, embedded even in the formalities of the language. In any case Korea's landed oligarchy wound up in the cities, trying to recoup lost dominance through politics and the ubiquitous educational facilities that dot the capital; as good Confucian gentlemen, this was much more their *métier* than commerce and industry, nor did they have much use for populist coalitions with organized labour. Thus were both industrialization and authoritarian rule facilitated.

In spite of the tepid nature of the opposition, and the amputation of the Left before and during the Korean War, there has been virtually no period since 1945 when it has been clear that the opposition was accepted as a legitimate force, or that its victory in elections would translate into presidential tenure—or indeed that it might not itself suffer nosebleed and vertigo at the prospect of assuming power. The exception is the brief period after the 'April revolution' in 1960, with the only government ever organized by the opposition. That regime ended after less than a year with the bang of a *coup*, but its leadership went out with a whimper. The Premier (Chang Myon) hid in a nunnery, while an ally arranged a mostly bloodless 'transition' to military rule.¹⁵ A transition in the other direction might have happened in the 1963 or 1971 elections, but I doubt it; it might have happened in the 1987 elections, had the opposition united, but I doubt it.

A major difference with Latin America, then, is that there is no party system or network of political experience that the military can 'pass politics back to'. Parties remain congeries of supporters uniting around a single leader, on a clientelist pattern modified by the extraordinary top-down

¹⁴ See Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 2, Princeton 1989.

¹⁵ Peer de Silva, CIA station chief in 1960–61, writes as if President Chang hearkened to his every demand—which he probably did. See de Silva, *Sub Rosa*, New York 1978.

nature of Korean leadership. (Everything must pass through the party leader or the state chief executive.) Lately they have taken on a pronounced regional character, because of the uneven development of the past quarter-century. Park, Chun and Roh have all come from the south-east, and poured investment into the area at the expense of the southwest, which with its rich rice lands is the traditional base of the opposition. This had the paradox of splintering the opposition in the general elections of December 1987, while giving it the advantage in the single-member district assembly elections of 1988. The militarists-in-mufti are regionally strong but generally so unpopular that even with extensive regime manipulation and wads of money for any and allcomers, they can get no more than thirty-five per cent of the vote in the 1980s.¹⁶

The South Korean state has a far stronger role in the economy than any Latin American state save Cuba.¹⁷ What may be less well known is its *lateral weakness*. The US still commands the South Korean Army, maintains 41,000 servicemen in an array of military bases, controls resident nuclear weapons, and deeply penetrates various bureaucracies through longstanding personal ties, direct involvement in certain arenas (military intelligence, joint war manoeuvres, nuclear energy), and frequent (but secret) surveillance of Korean officials. (President Park's Blue House office, for example, was known to be bugged by the National Security Agency in the 1970s.) American influence in the media is large, with one of three television stations being Armed Forces/Korea, broadcasting in English. This lateral weakness makes South Korea hyper-sensitive to any changes in US-Korean relations, from rumours of troop withdrawal to seemingly mundane items like critical 'op-ed' essays, which are flashed back to Korea for instantaneous response. American Presidential elections have an immediate refractory effect on South Korea.

A Protectionist Island

Lateral weakness does not necessarily entail openness to the world market: quite the opposite. South Korea has been a protectionist island in the hegemonic free trade sea since the 1940s, something an indulgent America was willing to tolerate for many years if it got the Korean economy going. One could be jailed for smoking a foreign cigarette until Michael Deaver jarred the door open a crack in the mid-1980s. The ROK is open mainly to those imports which become part of its exports. It has had particularly strong neo-mercantilist tendencies since the early 1970s, which Washington has resisted in recent years.

Another crucial distinction is that South Korea exists in a very different *regional configuration* from that of South American states. It too is a region of unilateral US hegemony—although more intense and brooding, less diffuse. But since the early 1960s South Korea, unlike Latin America, has been subject to the dual influence of US hegemony and the Japanese

¹⁶ The regime paid \$40 a head just to turn people out for ruling party rallies in December 1987; that is a good week's wages.

¹⁷ For a particularly good analysis of the historical and contemporary role of the ROK state, see Jung-eun Woo, 'State Power, Finance and Korean Development', unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1988.

economy, and has a high trade dependency on both markets. Japanese economic influence returned under heavy American pressure during the Kennedy Administration, followed by a 'normalization' of relations in 1965. South Korea is integrally connected to the product cycle of US and Japanese industry, and also functions as the surreptitious frontier defence for Japan. We may say, in fact, that the coercive capacities of the South Korean state function as the *completion* of the Japanese state: that is, without the ROK Army Japan would have to reconsider its entire military posture (against foreign and domestic pressures). The condition of post-war Japanese democracy is in part the continued existence of a bureaucratic-authoritarian state in Korea.

Although South Korea is a dependent state, enmeshed in a security, trade, finance and political dependency on the US and Japan, it does not show the classic features of *dependencia* that it did in the colonial era. Levels of direct foreign investment are generally much lower than in Latin America, although the transnational sector is big and contains many joint ventures with foreign multinationals.²⁸ Unlike Taiwan but like many Latin American states, South Korea financed its 'big push' through foreign lending, accumulating a debt burden more or less equivalent to Argentina's. (The two were the third and fourth largest debtors through much of the 1980s.) Unlike Latin American nations, Korea refracted this finance through a highly directive state, benefiting rising industries, penalizing inefficient and declining ones, always with an eye to world-market competition.²⁹ As in Latin America, economic policy is usually in the hands of a class of transnational experts, mostly economists trained at Chicago, Stanford, Harvard and other institutions of imperial tutelage.

The last important distinction is that the Korean bourgeoisie has been weaker than its counterparts in Brazil, Argentina, Chile or Uruguay. If we remember Hegel's insight that 'a prime concern of the state [was] that a middle class should be developed', we have a hint about Korea's 'late' configuration and the *class-making role* of the state. It has substituted for a mostly absent capitalist class, while priming various pumps that would create that same class—just as the North Korean state has systematically fostered the growth of an industrial proletariat that was its putative base. The Rhee regime used AID grants to tie budding industrialists to it, and to foster an urban consuming class; the Park and Chun regimes did the same with external lending, while puffing up big industrial conglomerates overnight—most of them with very big debt/equity ratios.³⁰

Dahl Resurgent, Political Economy Interred

O'Donnell's parsimonious model of the bureaucratic-authoritarian system was undermined by a number of cogent critiques.³¹ But it has above all been the march of events—a decade of mostly unexpected and certainly

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ For a good comparison on this score, see Peter Evans, 'Class, State and Dependence in East Asia: Lessons for Latin Americanists', in Fred Deyo, ed., *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism*, Ithaca 1987.

³⁰ Woo, op. cit.

³¹ See especially Serra and Hirschman, in Collier, ed., op. cit.

unpredicted democratic *aberturas* through most of the Latin American continent—which has appeared to demolish the theory. O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead have combined their (and others') interpretations of these openings in a major, four-volume project on democratization. O'Donnell and Schmitter summarize the results by emphasizing explanations that are purely national or local. They point to:

the high degree of indeterminacy embedded in situations where unexpected events (*fortuna*), insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, plasticity, and even indefiniteness of political identities, as well as the talents of specific individuals (*virtu*), are frequently decisive in determining the outcomes. This is not to deny that the macrostructural factors are still 'there'. . . . But even those mediations are looser, and their impacts more indeterminate, than in normal circumstances. *The short-term political calculations we stress here cannot be 'deduced' from or 'imputed' to such structures—except perhaps in an act of misguided faith.*²²

O'Donnell now denies that the timing or sequencing of the *aberturas* can be 'correlated predictably' with regime performance in the economy; indeed his recent work is explicitly atheoretical and frankly uncertain. A concern for how structures shape choices thus gives way to chance occurrence, charismatic intervention, or moments of popular enthusiasm and community.

This tendency is paralleled in the work of a brilliant Latin American thinker, if not Latin Americanist: Roberto Mangabeira Unger, whose *Knowledge and Power* predicated a theory of organic groups on a dazzling critique of liberal thought and practice, but whose new work, *False Necessity*, rejects established social structures and their constraints in favour of a theory of human 'plasticity' and individual empowerment.²³ This strikes an untutored observer as a typically Latin version of the intense privatism and disillusion of our era, which takes a colder positivist form in American social science (rational choice theory), or a Continental form in Foucault's local *groupuscules* or Habermas's distinction between 'system' and 'life-world', the latter giving rise to 'new politics', 'individual self-realization', and an assortment of Green Party-like 'new social movements'. As Belden Fields aptly remarks, this is 'the opposite of putting things together'; it neglects the totality in favour of local and spontaneous action.²⁴

A previous emphasis on political economy has given way to atheoretical and idiosyncratic explanations of more or less successful democratic

²² O'Donnell/Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusions*, op. cit., pp. 3, 20; and Schmitter in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, Washington 1986, p. 3. Emphasis added.

²³ 'By the radical project or the project of the modernist visionary I mean the attempt to realize the many forms of individual or collective empowerment that result from our relative success in disengaging our practical and passionate dealings from the restrictive influence of entrenched social roles and hierarchies.' Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*, New York 1987, p. 9.

²⁴ Fields in Gary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana, Ill. 1988.

'openings' in one Latin American country after another. The *abertura* seems in fact to be the looking glass, where words mean what the author wishes them to mean (*duros* and *blandos*, *dictablanda*, *democradura*), and where comparability with other regions is lost. What is the decision rule for saying this person is hard-line or soft-line, that system is 'liberalized autocracy' instead of 'limited democracy'? It is one thing to lay analysis to the side while examining short-term, discrete, indeterminate and deeply complicated political moments; it is another to jettison powerful explanations for weaker and situation-dependent arguments that not only deny us comparability with other situations, but contain conceptual problems with basic phenomena like the world system, regional interactions, dependency, and the definition of democracy itself.

The analysts of the *abertura* do bring theory in, if through the back door of the obscure but telling footnote. Rather than develop their own conception of democracy, O'Donnell, Schmitter, Kaufman and Przeworski, among others, uniformly define democracy by reference to Robert Dahl's *Polyarchy*, a classic pluralist account of the North American system.²⁵ 'After long and violent struggle,' O'Donnell writes, 'the main political, social and religious forces concluded that the costs of trying to eliminate each other exceeded the costs of tolerating each other's differences'—a process 'well described in a model proposed by Robert Dahl'. A particular pluralist, Jimmie Carter, also comes in for praise, for his human rights policy in the late 1970s.²⁶

One reason for this is clear, and admirable: in comparison with state terrorism and elaborate torture systems, such as that in Argentina, pluralism is not simply preferable, but a positive good that saves real people. The thought is reflected in the title of a book on radical politics in Detroit in the 1960s: *I Do Mind Dying*. In the face of the complicity or indifference of the Reagan administration with regard to the Argentinian junta or the current regime in, say, El Salvador, one cannot but welcome the kind of incremental gain represented by Carter's human rights programme. But there remain a number of basic points. First, regardless of the merits of Dahl's polyarchy, it is not likely to be the hegemonic system in either Latin America or East Asia; indeed Northeast and Southeast Asia show not a single system of this type, with the possible exception of Aquino's *democrablanda*. Second, Carter's human rights programme was subordinated in East Asia to the 'China card' and to concerns about security in Korea and the Philippines, or collapsed by reasons of state to leave Carter in bed with Pol Pot by the end of the decade. It was on Carter's watch, not Reagan's, and with American support, that the colonels in Korea mounted their bloody *coup* in 1980. Furthermore the policy on human rights had the ephemeral quality of that President himself, here today and gone tomorrow, a passing that demands explanation in more than personalistic terms.²⁷

²⁵ This is true of the entire four-volume study (see, for example, Kaufman's and Przeworski's essays in *Transitions: Comparative Perspectives*—esp. pp. 86, 100), as it is of O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, Berkeley 1973, p. 86.

²⁶ O'Donnell, in *Transitions: Latin America*, p. 15. Cf. O'Donnell (p. 359) and Kurth (p. 73) in Middlebrook and Rico, op. cit.

²⁷ Susanne Jonas argues that Carter's policy followed essentially the same trajectory in Latin America and in East Asia: a couple of years of activism, followed by abandonment of human rights criteria in favour of 'a strict security/counter-insurgency focus'. I think she's right. See her 'Introduction' in *Contemporary Marxism* 14, Fall 1986.

The Rules of Pluralism

If we are to be scientists of politics (albeit for myself *scientablanda* in the Continental sense, not *scientadara* in the positivist sense), it is essential that we get our definitions straight. For example, in his discussion of democratic transitions, drawing on Dahl but going beyond him, Adam Przeworski presents an elaborate argument about strategic actors in particular historical situations, with choices and strategies 'to some extent indeterminate with regard to positions that the participants occupy in all social relations, including the relations of production'. Capitalists, he writes, 'do not always win conflicts that are processed in a democratic manner; indeed, they have to struggle continually in pursuit of their interests. In a democracy, no one can win once and for all . . . ' This passage mixes one myth with another. The first is the subliminal notion that Marxists think capitalists always win conflicts in a democracy, which is not at all Marx's position; the second reads like textbook mythology, and is in fact not disprovable: when does the once-and-for-all occur?

Przeworski goes on to say that democracy is a system that 'determines the capacity of particular groups to realize their specific interests'. He illustrates this point by an analogy with basketball: 'The probability that a basketball team composed of players who are seven-feet tall will beat a six-feet tall team by a number of points is determined by the height of the basket.' Now, having been a basketball player, I can assert that this proposition is false. Assuming that basketball skills are equal, the tall players are always likely to win—and these days the skills are distributed without much regard to height. Pluralism is a system assuming that all political skills are equal, that the basket is the same height for all, and therefore that all group interests will register. Why is it that I feel as if I'm shooting a set shot from several miles out, while Paul Volcker (to take an example of a tall man) gets to dunk from his armchair? More generally, many issues of supreme importance for the maintenance of capitalism are outside the purview of pluralist politics (which is not to say that capitalists always win).

Przeworski further argues: 'Capitalist democracy constitutes a form of class compromise in the sense that in this system neither the aggregate of interests of individual capitalists (persons and firms) nor the interests of organized wage earners can be violated beyond specific limits. These limits have been specified by Gramsci: profits cannot fall so low as to threaten reproduction of capital, and wages cannot fall so low as to make profits appear as a particularistic interest of capital.' I may have missed something, but this seems to me a description of capitalism *per se* rather than of bourgeois democracy, or perhaps capitalism since the advent of organization amongst wage-earners and the owners' recognition that better wages bring better markets (i.e., since the 1840s in England). It is certainly compatible with a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. (Actually I don't understand Przeworski's last clause: what is the relationship between low wages and perceptions of profit as a particularist interest of capital? Isn't it quite common that decent wages coexist with perceptions of profit as the province of capital?) Perhaps because of these premisses, Przeworski finds it 'striking' that in post-Franco Spain 'the political

system has been transformed without affecting economic relations in any discernible manner'.²⁸

As many critics of the pluralist model have pointed out, the rules of the pluralist game organize some issues in and other issues out, through a mobilization of bias, putting certain basics beyond the reach of the rules of the game and the established consensus: property rights, for example. The assumptions and the rules explicitly favour elites, and frown directly on the capacities of ordinary people and the charismatic intervention of mass movements and popular *aberturas*. In the place of the ideal of the citizen (which O'Donnell frequently and rightly lauds) comes the systemic virtues of mass passivity. Speaking specifically of Dahl's polyarchy, Bachrach wrote: 'The relationship of elites to masses is, in a vital way, reversed from classical theory: masses, not elites, become the potential threat to the system, and elites, not masses, become its defenders.' The ordinary man/woman of course plays a role in the system, through the vote, episodic involvement in pressure groups, and rare examples of elevation to the political elite. 'But by and large he does, and is expected to, remain relatively passive—in fact the health of the system depends on it.'²⁹ It was only a short jump from pluralist theory to Samuel Huntington's 'democratic distemper'—but then Huntington never recommended pluralism to the Third World; instead of a dispersal of power he wanted an accumulation. The critics of pluralism found their alternative to Dahl's polyarchy in self-developmental or participatory democracy, defined as empowerment through association with others, rather than through individualist assertion³⁰—something much closer to the reality of recent popular mobilizations in Latin America and East Asia.

The Question of the Collision

At this point it might be worth recalling Marx's observation, in his critique of Hegel's political philosophy, that the German state was the result of only 'partial victories over the Middle Ages'; Hegel's state was an amalgam of the feudal, the organic and the democratic. Whereas in England and France 'it is a question of the solution', in Germany 'it is only a question of the collision'. Hegel implicitly recognized this amalgam, and the impending collision, but hoped to overcome both through extolling the historic role of the middle class. And if it did not exist, or existed imperfectly, then, in Hegel's words, it was 'a prime concern of the state that a middle class should be developed'.³¹ If Hegel dwelt on romantic notions mingling an old organic conception of the state with the

²⁸ *Transitions: Comparative Perspectives*, pp. 56–63.

²⁹ Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism*, Boston 1967, pp. 8–9. Schmitter misses this point entirely in his discussion of pluralism as a system of 'extensive voluntary participation' versus authoritarian regimes which demand at least 'passive acceptance'. (In Alfred Stepan, ed., *Authoritarian Brazil*, New Haven 1973, p. 211.)

³⁰ Bachrach, pp. 8, 18, 38, 100; Philip Green and Sanford Levinson, *Power and Community: Dissenting Essays in Political Science*, New York 1969. See also Atilio Borón, 'Latin America: Between Hobbes and Friedman', *New Left Review* 130, November–December 1981, who speaks of a liberal 'debasement' of the emancipatory content of democracy.

³¹ Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State', 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, NLB/Penguin, Harmondsworth 1975, pp. 116, 247–49, 253.

modern parliamentary form, for Marx this merely indicated 'late development', something that was bound to pass because it had passed in England and America.

It is obvious that this is the kernel of Barrington Moore's fine analysis of three paths to modernity, each hinging dramatically on the relative weight of the middle class. It is assumed, usually implicitly, that the three paths correlated with early, late and (perhaps) Stalinist industrialization (the English, the German, and the Soviet or Chinese path). As Moore says in his preface, there is something called the bourgeois revolution, which produced parliamentary democracy, and it happened in England, France and North America. As his title for Part One tells us, capitalist democracy had *revolutionary origins*, that is, it was forged in some violent passage. Elsewhere bourgeois revolutions have been somehow abortive, if no less violent. This emphasis on timing and on amalgams of lord, peasant and bourgeois will be important to our later analysis of democratization.

Moore also wrote in the preface: 'The focus of interest is on innovation that has led to political power, not on the spread and reception of institutions that have been hammered out elsewhere. . . . The fact that the smaller countries depend economically and politically on big and powerful ones means that the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries.'³² Three ideas animate this passage: first, a focus on breakthroughs that constitute new forms of political power; second, a sense of the world *spread* of political doctrines and systems; third, the problem of *dependency*. Innovation is nothing other than the *abortare* set in its proper structural context. In other words I make the assumption that even short-term, idiosyncratic episodes of democratization cannot be understood without a social-structural and a world-structural perspective, placed also in world time.³³

On the second point, what strikes the comparativist is that North and South America are regions of migrated (or fragmented) politics, whereas East Asia generally is not—or not so until very recently. What I mean here is the Hartzian³⁴ notion that the Latin American amalgam brings together, but never fully realizes, a South European, an Iberian and an indigenous politics (liberal, corporate and nativist models in a mix, to put it simply). The United States, however, is more purely an implant than an amalgam: Lockean liberalism was imposed on a continent cleared brutally of natives, who were never assimilated—and thus American liberalism differs from both the European and the Latin American variant.

Born free in an unfree world, the North American cannot grasp the *Sturm und Drang* that marked the birth of liberal politics, nor can he grasp the revolutionary project. Not knowing feudalism, he cannot know socialism. Instead he takes liberalism to be the natural form, God-given, and seeks

³² Moore, *op. cit.*, xi–xvii.

³³ In the four-volume study of transitions, Terry Lynn Karl's essay (*Transitions: Latin America*, pp. 196–201) is the only one to hint at such a perspective.

³⁴ Here I draw on Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*, New York 1964, but also of course on his *Liberal Tradition in America*, New York 1955.

to impose it elsewhere, only to be frustrated.³⁵ The Latin American liberal fragment, on the other hand, coexists uneasily with non-liberal forms, ever fearful of extinction, ever incapable of hegemony. Born of the Enlightenment, both North and South American liberalism have a deep tendency to shut it out—through a consensual complacency in the US that Hartz now and then called totalitarian, and through the intermittent superiority of the anti-liberal fragments in South America.

As Hartz put it, 'the full *ancien régime* did not move outward, a full "Spain"'; instead the migration to South America was mostly military, clerical and rural. In the migration from Europe to South America, Lockean liberalism left both the aristocracy and the peasantry behind. While the US became the most thoroughly bourgeois nation on earth, nearly everyone perceiving himself to be part of the middle class, from Francisco Bilbao's classic analysis of Chilean 'feudalism' forward, the Latin American lament has been 'the failure of a libertarian middle class to arise, "like the bourgeoisie in Europe"'. North American liberalism unfolds its *telos* in a vacuum, except for its revealing collision with blacks; South American liberalism is always bumping into something else. So, among other things one got the *caudillo* pattern, as a projection of the Spanish past and Spanish rule, with an admixture of indigenous Indian tradition, romping in the vacuum where the middle class 'ought' to be; later one got a form of populism that often looked like, and partook of, European fascism. But it is precisely the point that the Latin American variant always approximated to fully developed European forms, falling short in the liberal republican mode (no Jefferson), or the corporatist mode (no Franco or Salazar), or the fascist mode (no Mussolini). And yet the fragment, as Hartz argued, in spite of its diversity, still 'yields in the end the same formal problems' as did Western Europe.³⁶

This is, obviously, a Eurocentric appraisal that offends both the American liberal and the American corporatist; it denies completion just as it denies authenticity. Yet it does seem that in both South America and East Asia, the formal problems of democratization and the lexicon through which we interpret them have an ineradicable European origin: we talk European whether we like it or not, such that the problem of the bourgeoisie animates the most ambitious interpretation of Korean politics, with the Bilbaoist lament just as prominent: why is there no vibrant middle class?³⁷

In both regions the experts themselves quarrel about which tradition holds sway. East Asianists find in 'Confucianism' the same authoritarian tradition that Wiarda finds in Latin American corporatism ('hierarchical, authoritarian and non-democratic... its roots antedate the liberal tradition to the period of Spanish rule'); their antagonists hold forth on indigenous democratic roots (O'Donnell criticizes 'interpretations obsessed with the Iberic, corporatist tradition', specifically

³⁵ It is not too unfair, I think, to point out that Dahl grew up in one of the few American cities where pluralist theory describes the reality of urban politics: Seattle, a city of remarkably narrow class distance, that is, of a thoroughly middle-class character.

³⁶ Hartz, *op. cit.* (1964), pp. 13–33.

³⁷ See Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex*, Cambridge 1968.

Wiarda's).³⁸ Hartz's wisdom is evident in the simple observation that such debates do not take place over liberalism in the United States, except in highly parodied form (Reagan as fascist, McGovern as communist).

The Intersection of Temporalities

The argument stretching from Marx's critique of Hegel to Hartz's ruminations on fragments amounts to a case for grasping the capitalist contingency of bourgeois or pluralist democracy, which no one needs to hear yet again, and two things that do bear repeating: the differential timing of global instances of democratization, and the world-ranging 'European migration', both in fragments of political tradition and experience, and in a language that we must use, willy-nilly. We get different amalgams in different sequences, or what Perry Anderson aptly calls an 'intersection of different historical temporalities'.³⁹

Anderson is interested in European regimes before the Second World War which were not completed bourgeois democracies, but embodied a more or less liberal form simultaneously with the intersection or 'triangulation' of continued agrarian or aristocratic dominance, the incipient emergence of the second industrial revolution with its novel technologies (telephones, automobiles—consumer durables produced for mass consumption), and the 'imaginative proximity of social revolution'. If West Europe's ultimate *telos* was bourgeois, that was not certain until 1945. Until that time liberal progressivism had to contend with romantic reaction on the right and social revolution on the left, both of them anti-market: the conjuncture contained 'a still usable classical past, a still indeterminate technical present, and a still unpredictable political future'. The Second World War finished off this conjuncture, leaving universal bourgeois democracy in Western Europe. Hartz's shining promise/dark night of liberal hegemony had been realized, and the revolutionary prospect faded away—bequeathing a 'closure of horizons: without an appropriable past, or imaginable future, in an interminably recurrent present'. This, at least for Anderson, is the contemporary terminus of the bourgeois revolution: 'an oppressively stable, monolithically industrial, capitalist civilization'.

In the United States, hardly anyone believes that we can solve our problems through the architecture of politics. That is why we derive the President-as-curiosity: Richard Nixon, ever curiouser and curiouser. Jimmie Carter, Baptist preacher and peanut farmer hoisted well beyond his station by Watergate. Ronald Reagan, cavorting with footballs ('Win One for the Gipper') at an age when most men have trouble going to the toilet. His *recherche du temps perdu* exists solely on the plane of cinema, and not even good cinema. The last President who could remotely be compared

³⁸ In Middlebrook and Rico, op. cit., pp. 329, 358. For East Asia see Cumings's critique of Henderson in 'Is Korea a Mass Society?', *Occasional Papers on Korea*, Seattle 1973.

³⁹ Perry Anderson, 'Modernity and Revolution', *New Left Review* 144, March–April 1984, p. 104. Anderson reacts to Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, a vintage example of individualist plasticity masquerading as Marxist analysis. For a brilliant passage by Marx on 'intersecting temporalities', see 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Early Writings*, op. cit., pp. 338–39.

to Franklin Roosevelt was Lyndon Johnson, but his back was broken by a crippling regionalism and defeat in war. Our Presidents are items for mass consumption. We grow tired of them as rapidly as we do of our cars. It is no accident that this phenomenon dates precisely from 1968, a year of glory/morbidity that inaugurated two decades of flight from politics—where meaning in life is sought not in politics or in work, let alone 'public life' (an archaic concept), but in private worlds of consumption and 'self-discovery'.

The American mainstream, however, beholds an oppressively stable, monolithic *socialist* civilization, which is presumed to need, and in Gorbachev's Russia or Deng's China to be verging on, an evolution toward pluralism and the market: becoming more like us, in other words. The self-congratulatory drivel that passes for objective analysis on this possibility, laddled out by pundit and scholar alike, has served to refurbish and make respectable the deep-running anti-communism that so afflicts debate in the US. But this also highlights the absence of any visible political alternatives. It is tribute to Moore's insight that two decades ago he hinted at the 'historical obsolescence' of both Western liberalism and Soviet socialism. 'Industrialism, as it continues to spread', he wrote, 'may in some distant future still these voices forever and make revolutionary radicalism as anachronistic as cuneiform writing.'⁴⁰

The conjuncture has not played itself out everywhere, however. In the Third World, Anderson argues, there has emerged 'a kind of shadow configuration of what once prevailed in the First World': pre-capitalist oligarchy, incipient but unstable capitalist development, social revolution gnawing at the innards.⁴¹ This sort of conception, I should think, allows us to get closer to the real meaning of democratization, in East Asia or Latin America, in our time.

If Alexander Gerschenkron is right to say that no two industrializations are the same, but follow each other sequentially such that each new stage changes the terms of the problem, we can also say that no two democratizations are the same. Yet both industrialization and democratization will partake of Gerschenkron's problematic or Moore's three paths or Hartz's 'formal problems' or Anderson's 'triangulation'. To say that each episode is unique is not to say that each episode presents different problems: the same problems are presented, in different form, at different times.

The Contributions of Wallerstein and Polanyi

Moore's third point spotlights the larger field in which political systems and regions exist and interact. The disappearance of political economy in some of the democratization literature is mimicked by the extrusion of

⁴⁰ Moore, pp. 305–308.

⁴¹ In *The Civil Wars in Chile, or the Bourgeois Revolutions that Never Were* (Princeton 1984), Maurice Zeitlin provides an excellent account of a multiplicity of contradictory and discordant Chilean social formations merging in different temporalities to form a hybrid parliamentary democracy. I have argued a somewhat similar position in relation to the Korean experience: an amalgam of lord, peasant and entrepreneur likely to have produced revolution, save for the 'untimely' appearance of American power. *The Origins of the Korean War*, vols. 1 and 2.

dependencia as a central Latin American problem. Gary Becker announces the dawn of 'post-imperialism', Zeitlin condemns Wallerstein for neglecting domestic (class) sources of Chilean development, and all seem to think that the original synthesizer of Latin America's relationship to the world, André Gunder Frank, is distinctly passé. The same has happened in the East Asian field (except that *dependencia* barely got off the ground before it was declared inapplicable). The recent preference, whether from Marxist or non-Marxist analysts, is for nationally specific explanations.⁴²

As part of my back-to-basics movement, let me just quote Marx again, in a simple formulation: 'I examine the system of bourgeois economy in the following order: capital, landed property, wage-labour; the State, foreign trade, world market.'⁴³ I do not think it is wrong to imply a movement or direction from the first to the last, and thence back again. Wallerstein learned much from this formulation, it would seem; in any case it gives us a clue to his real (dialectical) argument, and to a demise prematurely announced. As Daniel Garst argues, social-structural or conjunctureally specific critiques by Brenner and Skocpol have not yet demolished Wallerstein's analysis of the 'world-system'. Asserting the primacy of neither the economic nor the political but the interaction of the two, this term 'refers to an institutional structure that shapes the *interplay* between the political variables associated with the interstate system and the economic variables associated with the world-wide capitalist exchange network. The multiplicity of sovereign states and the world-wide system of commodity production based on an international division of labour that make up this institutional structure form a complex and historically emergent totality whose parts cannot be understood in isolation from one another.'⁴⁴

My preference for a theory of the world market is Karl Polanyi's *Great Transformation*, which among other things yields a conception of the state as more-or-less successful gate-keeper to the world economy, with periodic openings and closures in search of its interests (involvement or insulation), each alternative detonating dramatic changes in economic policy, social structure and political coalitions at home. Furthermore I think O'Donnell basically had this in mind in his early analysis of both the populist phase inaugurated in the 1930s (insulating Argentina or Brazil against the world crisis), and the bureaucratic-authoritarian phase coincident with opening to the world economy and industrial deepening.⁴⁵

A Polanyi/Wallerstein conception also yields a lateral dimension to the strength of state structures: some states are strong in relation to their own societies but weak in relation to hegemonic powers or the 'world-system', for example. I will argue that this is one way to distinguish between the South Korean and the Latin American states, and between their respective moves toward democratization.

⁴² David Becker, 'Development, Democracy and Dependency in Latin America: A Post-Imperialist View', *Third World Quarterly* 6/2, April 1984, pp. 411-31; Zeitlin, op. cit.

⁴³ Marx, 'Preface', in *Early Writings*, p. 424.

⁴⁴ Daniel Garst, 'Wallerstein and His Critics', *Theory and Society* 14/4, July 1985, p. 470. I am indebted to Peter Katzenstein for bringing this article to my attention.

⁴⁵ O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, pp. 54, 57-75.

Korea's Abortive Abertura

In the light of this discussion, let us now return directly to the problem of Korea's abortive *abertura*. South Korea has had a political pattern of seemingly stable rule interrupted by devastating disorders (1960, 1979-80, 1987). The volatility of popular collisions with the state expresses the 'shadow configuration' of early twentieth-century Western Europe that we spoke of earlier, amongst people who still believe—in spite of (because of?) withering repression—in the efficacy of politics. In Korea and Argentina and much of the 'Third World', the architecture of politics still holds sway.

It is perfectly obvious, for example, that the period of student protest in 1960s America cannot hold a candle to the sacrifices of Korean students and young people over the past thirty years, dating from the overthrow of Rhee in 1960, numbered in hundreds of deaths, thousands of protests, millions of participants, and uncounted clubbings, beatings and acts of pitiless torture. As anyone at an elite American university now knows, these same Korean young people are disciplined, voracious intellectuals who have an unquenched hunger for meaning in life that seems almost quaint compared with the attitudes of American students of the 1980s. At bottom the dissidents express about their homeland the meaning of the Biblical injunction, what profits a man to gain the world and lose his soul? What profits South Korea to scale the heights of capitalist industry and lose its historic place from antiquity, as a philosophical and moral beacon in the East? We may measure the distance between there and here by saying that Koreans still think that kings should be philosophers and philosophers kings, an idea that could not occur in our indulgence of the President-as-curiosity.

Unlike Latin or North America, Korean politics grows out of a long, direct political tradition, which pundits like to term 'authoritarian'. In the case of China, Korea and Vietnam, Confucian philosophy and statecraft was more than a fragment: implanting itself from antiquity in China, it migrated outward to the two tributary states where it realized itself fully over centuries. (In the Korean case it first influenced the ancient Silla kingdom, and was hegemonic from 1392 to 1910 in the Yi Dynasty.) The confrontation with modern liberalism was thus one between alternative civilizations, in which liberalism could only be imposed through war or revolution. In the twentieth century, however, the archaeology of Korean politics shows two overlays, two fragments: the 1930s Japanese state, as we have seen, and the American liberal state (a fragment perched on the indigenous pattern and the Japanese residue like a ski lodge on the slopes of an avalanche-prone mountain).

The opposition leader best known in the West is Kim Dae Jung, and we may explain his recent Presidential defeat most generally by saying that he precisely embodies the conjuncture of temporalities we mentioned earlier. Landed background and Confucian ideas here mingle with liberal democratic notions, the latter always filtered through—and transformed by—the former, alongside confrontation with Korea's 'anti-feudal' and 'anti-liberal': the Korean revolution. All one has to do is peruse his *Prison Letters*, which he has likened to Gramsci's, to grasp this. Witness, for

example, his wholly traditional admonitions to his daughter on how to be a good (Confucian) wife.⁴⁶ He is a complex product of, in Anderson's words, 'a declining aristocratic order, an incipient bourgeois technology, and the prospect of social revolution'. The latter, in utterly predictable fashion, Kim rejects outright and always has—save as a young man, when he joined local 'people's committees' in 1945, something held against him ever since which he has ever sought to live down. His hand still palsies in reaching toward labour, even though that constituency could help him reach beyond his regional base in the southwest.

The other two Kims (of the three who emerged prominent in the 1988 assembly elections), Kim Young Sam and Kim Jong Pil, are even less leavened by any concern for labour or the Left. The former cut his teeth under the tutelage of Cho Pyong-ok, who ran the National Police for the Americans during the Occupation; the latter was part of the coup triumvirate in 1961 and proceeded to hold the Park regime together by organizing both the KCIA and the ruling party of that era.

The Regime in the North

Perhaps we may say a bit more about the revolutionary threat: it resides north of the DMZ, in a regime that combined Korea's conjuncture in far more potent mould: a charismatic incarnation, extension, and eventual overcoming of the 'declining aristocratic order' (Kim Il Sung as emperor and embodiment of the past), modern technology applied to industry (and never criticized, as in Mao's China), a state that makes classes (a proletariat out of a vast peasantry), and a social revolution, more fixed and less potent today than in the 1940s and 1950s. Some call North Korea 'feudal socialism', more an epithet than a description of regime type. What is more accurate is to say that this regime manifests the totalizing propensities of all Marxist-Leninist regimes within the totalizing political culture of Korea, where so much flows from the top and from the leader's 'idea', and where the conception of an organic polity—much touted in the antiquarian North—sets many Koreans to more or less obvious salivation. The combustibility of the South Korean polity, then, can be understood in part by grasping the glowing embers of a previous combustion in North Korea.

It is common for pundits to say that Kim Il Sung's regime has little appeal in the South, and that is probably true *qua* regime. Perhaps the most important development in South Korea, however, has been the emergence of a brand of revolutionary thought amongst young people in recent years, which has taken the practical form of a major movement to establish links between student dissidents and labour. The historic failing of the intellectual class in Korea, whether traditional, liberal or radical, was its absence of links with a mass base or constituency—more properly, its contempt for the whole idea that workers or peasants have any part in the political process save as followers. The radical intellectual therefore set his task as the seizure of state power, after which the 'revolution' would be

⁴⁶ Kim Dae Jung, *Prison Letters*, Berkeley 1986.

imposed from the top down—a striking similarity with Eastern European intellectuals.⁴⁷

For many years the same tendency afflicted student dissidents, who throughout the 1950s and 1960s failed to link up with any non-intellectual constituency, and were widely seen by ordinary people as sons and daughters of aristocratic, formerly landed families who sought through politics to recoup their lost dominance. Workers routinely condemned their demonstrations. In the past decade, however, large numbers of young people have taken factory jobs at great personal sacrifice and sought to merge with Korea's burgeoning urban working class in the manner of Gramscian 'organic intellectuals' (the state calls them 'disguised workers'). Furthermore the new, heavy-industrial sector has been a prominent arena for such action (e.g. the major strike at the Daewoo auto factory in April 1985); in the past few years the labour movement 'has become quite organically meshed with the radical student movement', as liberal labour rights groups like the Christian Urban Industrial Mission have entered into decline. An enormous cultural and intellectual space has opened through the publication, and even unconcealed diffusion, of samizdat-type materials. Radicals openly and obsessively read Marx.⁴⁸

The same movement has become deeply 'anti-American', a term that should be translated as anti-dependency or anti-imperialist, growing out of the lateral US penetration of South Korea described earlier. This tendency draws both on leftist theory (Latin American *dependencia* texts are widely circulated), and on the always-fierce Korean nationalism that bring together radical nationalists of right and left in opposition to US and Japanese dominance. And here, in spite of its other failings, North Korea is a beacon because of its long practice of independence and self-reliance.

We get a glimmer of why this might be so in the Korean understanding of the term translated as 'liberal' (*chayun*). Both Koreas use the term, which etymologically denotes a coming-out-of-onself. In the South it means about the same as in Japan—'liberal', as in Liberal Democratic Party. In North Korea, *chayun* means freedom for the Korean nation/society, in a predatory world. If North Korea does not have to take orders from Moscow, or host foreign bases, or use foreign languages, then the people are free—free to be Korean, at a minimum. North Koreans are utterly bewildered, when they are not hostile, if one asks about the existence of basic political rights: if they do not see the question merely as propaganda, they really betray no conception of what one is talking about. They believe that they have realized Marx's point that 'the individual was free only to the extent that he was a member of a free [or purely Korean] community'. Be that as it may, the conception sets up a powerful undertow in South Korea.

⁴⁷ This point is made in a brilliant article by Zygmunt Bauman, 'Intellectuals in East-Central Europe: Continuity and Change', *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 1/2, Spring 1987, pp. 162–186.

⁴⁸ See Jang Jip Choi, *op. cit.*; and the journal *Mal* [Speech], particularly the special issue on the 'fraudulent' 1987 election and the article 'The Mass Movement amid Changing Tides', in No. 19, January 1988.

South Korea's middle class has been growing rapidly with industrialization and urbanization, but it remains difficult to specify its political tendency. Elements in it gave critical support to youthful dissidents in the June 1987 mobilization, but also faded from the streets once the elections terminated. Disaffected sectors would include small and medium businesses over which the state and the conglomerates have run roughshod; the regionally disadvantaged; parents who have witnessed the clubbing of students, and so on. The absence of effective representation in the regime is a basic issue. Much of the recent growth in Christian believers (about 25 per cent of the population) has taken place amongst this class or aspirants to it, and the witness and sacrifice of important church figures have galvanized parts of the middle class in favour of democratization. The middle class tends to be mostly salaried and bureaucratic, however, and has a slim basis for independent resistance against the state. Furthermore it is a prototypical ~~newman~~ social formation, far more intent on making money than contesting for power.

The democratization that occurred in 1987–88 in South Korea, like that in Brazil, has proceeded without dismantling the repressive state structures. The bureaucratic-authoritarian capacity is for now mostly latent, but capable of imminent mobilization; as such it rests like a dead hand on the business of democratization, always retarding progress and unnervingly ready to terminate an unacceptable outcome. That the structures are so much stronger in Korea than in Latin America merely means that the *abortura* is more inherently abortive.

To reiterate: Korean politics and the recent abortive democratization cannot be understood apart from relative lateness in world time. This is not to say that Korea is 'backward', nor that the trajectory of the modern project is smooth or progressive. Rather, Korea manifests the common twentieth-century problematic at an early stage of its joining—which gives it enormous energy of a kind that is relatively dissipated in the advanced industrial polities. When I walk the streets of Seoul (or Pyongyang for that matter) I see Promethean vitality mingling with, and taking its energy from, hard, hard *work*, but I do not see Gramscian morbidity. I do see it in Chicago. (That I would rather live in Chicago merely expresses my late twentieth-century subjectivity. It would not occur to a Martian.) In doing this I have walked back through modern world time. I can predict with perfect clairvoyance that even if Kim Dae Jung's daughter remains in her Confucian capsule within the household, most of the daughters of South Korea will not; a generation or two hence they will be reading the Korean equivalent of the *New York Times* 'Hers' column, united on nothing except their hatred of some latter-day Jerry Falwell ... unless revolution briefly interrupts the march of the bourgeois epoch.

Still the Century of Dependencia?

I wish to conclude this essay with a look at the external sources of democratization, as a way of explaining similarities and differences between Korea and Latin America. O'Donnell opens a recent essay with the statement that 'despite the world economic crisis' and despite Reagan administration policies, the hemisphere has witnessed the emergence and, hopefully, the consolidation of democratic regimes in the same

period.⁴⁹ I want to suggest that the causality might be different: *because of*, not *despite*, the crisis and the policies.⁵⁰

My position rests on a proposition indefensible in this space: that the United States is still hegemonic in its postwar sphere, in relative decline perhaps, but with at minimum a remarkable Indian summer in the 1980s. I do not refer to Reagan's defence buildup, but to economic mechanisms symbolized by Paul Volcker's position as central banker for the US and helmsman for the world economy (dunking baskets from his chair, as it were). Amongst other things, hegemony means both paying the costs of keeping the world system together, and passing them on to others. As Giovanni Arrighi has pointed out, late or mature imperialism tends to rely on daily economism to work its will. In the American case: 'Whereas in the first twenty years after the Second World War American hegemony was the agency whereby the unity of the world market was, albeit partially, reconstituted, during the last decade this unity has been, and still is today, the medium of the reassertion of US world hegemony.'⁵¹

William Greider discusses Volcker's role in managing Latin America's debt crisis as follows: 'Month by month, Paul Volcker was at the centre of the crisis management, lending his imprimatur to the IMF terms, pressuring both the debtor nations and the private banks to complete the deals. He dispatched aides to foreign capitals to bargain privately over snarled agreements. He met with bank executives to keep the process on track. Week by week, virtually every country became in turn a momentary subject of crisis.'⁵² I would argue that Volcker's tenure at the Federal Reserve represented a redeployed, recharged hegemony, relying mostly on economic mechanisms, enforcing doctrines of *austerity* and *efficiency* at home and abroad. The American position in the product cycle, relying increasingly on high-tech and service industries, would be aided by requirements for liberalization of target foreign markets. This aids our explanation of democratization: a spread of responsibility and a sharing of misery, as bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes with economies in tatters are forced to decompress; or an assault on exclusive markets insulated by strong states (the Korean bureaucratic-authoritarian industrializing regime).

Greider notes that Volcker passed on the costs of wringing inflation out of the American economy to ordinary wage-earners, enforcing a wrenching austerity programme known as the worst recession since the 1930s; he also saved the banks from themselves and their lending explosion of the 1970s, at the cost of their 'embarrassing dependency on Washington'.⁵³ Latin American nations, of course, got their own brand of austerity

⁴⁹ In Middlebrook and Rico, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁵⁰ I recognize that other Latin Americanists have focused on dependency, the economic crisis, and its influence on the *abertura*. See, for example, James Petras, 'The Redemocratization Process', *Contemporary Marxism* 14, Fall 1986. Petras stresses, as I do, that most of the 'redemocratizations' have been grafted onto pre-existing repressive state structures, thus assuring a continuity with the previous bureaucratic-authoritarian regime.

⁵¹ Giovanni Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism*, Verso, London 1983, pp. 103-104.

⁵² William Greider, *Secrets of the Temple. How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country*, New York 1987.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 520-21.

programme, enforced by the Fed, the IMF and the banks. Whitehead describes them as 'at the mercy of US domestic monetary authorities'.²⁴ But really, much of the world got an austerity programme. Because of the central dominance of US and Japanese technology and the world-shaping influence of the vast North American market, none but the most isolated or recalcitrant states could avoid being influenced by the twin dictums of austerity and efficiency—which gives us a further explanation of the inefficacy of the political in the 1980s, not just in the US but also in formerly radical or insurgent states like China or the Soviet Union.

In an interesting passage, Robert Kaufman finds a correlation between competitive or democratic systems and the ability to ride out economic crisis (e.g. Mexico); and between inability to handle crises and the existence of a non-competitive system that was highly repressive but where popular forces were most able 'to challenge transnational economic interests' (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay—strong triangulation, we might call it). The solution in crisis, then, is to move toward a broadly based political system. But what Kaufman really implies is that some form of pluralism in developing countries is the system of choice, given the 'strategic economic role now occupied by international business', i.e., the continued predominance of transnational capital. This means that the new democracies in Latin America will have to 'maintain relatively open economies', and emphasize exports, and external credits and technologies.²⁵

Why Democratization?

I am not sure if this is a celebration of the *apertura* or an admission of defeat, but it makes my point in this section. One cannot understand the 'opening' without consideration of the world system. If austerity is the programme, a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime only makes its costs worse for the target people, and raises the possibility of mercantilist default and withdrawal. In crises, democracy becomes a way of spreading and sharing responsibility, defusing the 'highly mobilized pueblo' and adapting to external realities, to a distinctly second-best world. Democracy is also the current system of choice for transnational capital. All this perhaps makes of democracy a kind of consumption of the passions, which leaders use to defuse pressure; in any case it is a far cry from the *bomms citoyen*, or from the period of populist participation in Latin America.

Volcker came in on Carter's watch, and his appointment was one important aspect of a general reversal of Carter's liberal policies that began in mid-1978, not when Reagan was elected. But in the Reagan years another reversal occurred, almost imperceptibly: the mid-1980s abandonment of the 'Kirkpatrick doctrine' in favour of a remarkable, unpredicted, and unexplained support for democratization—especially in the Philippines and South Korea, but also in Latin America. I can merely speculate that this did not emerge from a sudden love of democracy or human rights, but rather from a developing sense that Third World *apertura* was in the US interest.

²⁴ Whitehead in Middlebrook and Rico, op. cit., p. 89.

²⁵ Kaufman, in *Transitions: Comparative Perspectives*, pp. 88, 100.

Why? First, to defuse developing crises: after Aquino and Kim, the deluge; better a sharing of power in East Asia and a sharing of misery in Latin America than revolution. Second, democratization was a political corollary to very strong demands for markets in developing countries to be opened up to American goods, especially service industries like banks and insurance, but also tobacco, grain and meat. After all, strong bureaucratic-authoritarian states can be exclusionary toward the world beyond, as was unquestionably the case with Park's regime in the 1970s. They also hold wages down, and Washington would evidently appreciate the virtues of a rise in wages that would make the exports of these states less competitive. In August 1987 the South Korean regime acquiesced to major wage increases as a way of quieting an extraordinary proliferation of strikes; in the past, coercion would have been the preferred means.

Policies designed to decompress bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes often had the support of domestic business interests as well. (It is always important to remember that the bourgeoisie has a historic preference for bourgeois democracy.) For example, throughout the 1980s in Korea there was growing irritation on the part of big business (including the owner of the massive Hyundai conglomerate) with the heavy intrusions of the state. In the case of countries like Korea, democratization helps avoid the possibility that particular capitalists will gain the ear of the state to the detriment of others.⁵⁶

Cardoso highlights a similar process in Brazil in the 1970s, where instead of the march to hegemony of liberal democracy, one had 'the equivalent in the private sector of a policy of controlled liberalization', that is, liberalization in the economy *and* the polity. 'One has the impression,' he writes, 'that the local business community is a sort of Delilah, ready to entangle the Samson-state in a web of perfidious love, only to betray him and call in the Philistines of the private sector to rebuild a pagan democracy which does not light candles to the authoritarian god.'⁵⁷

A neglected aspect of the debt crisis and its relation to questions of dependency is its profound regional asymmetry—and it is precisely such asymmetry that goes so far to explain differences between the Latin America and East Asian political economies. South Korea has a pattern of reliance upon external lending rather than direct foreign investment, a result of its colonial background under Japan's guided industrialization, of particular state structures (including financial institutions like the Bank of Korea), its small domestic market, and its perennial nationalism/mercantilism.⁵⁸ Korea was thus able to make much better use of sovereign lending for industrial development in the 1970s, than was Latin America. It promoted industries with world-market comparative advantages, just as Brazil did in the 1970s, but without a crippling MNC presence in the economy. Thus, of the many called to upward mobility within the world system, South Korea was to be one of the chosen few. And as it advanced, Brazil, Mexico and other Latin American industrializers went into crisis—caused mainly by inability to service enormous debts.

⁵⁶ See Goran Therborn, 'The Travail of Latin American Democracy', *New Left Review* 113–114, January–April 1979.

⁵⁷ Cardoso, in *Transitions: Comparative Perspectives*, pp. 149–52.

⁵⁸ See Woo, *op. cit.*

Just as Volcker's high dollar opened the US market to a vast array of imports,⁵⁹ the Asian NICs took on a market position that Mexico and Brazil might otherwise have acquired. Furthermore, as Latin America became increasingly unable to import US goods, the direction of US trade skewed ever more towards the Pacific Rim, thereby stimulating East Asian exports to the US market and crowding out the goods that Latin America needed to export to repay its debt.

The Debt Crisis

The Latin American crunch came about 1982, with the major debtor countries mostly in default; they then became substantial net exporters of savings to the United States.⁶⁰ A crunch came in Korea, too; the political crisis in 1979–80 scared investors and lenders, and dealt a bad blow to the export-led economy. Growth rates went to a negative 6 per cent in 1980, followed by three years of approximate stasis in the ROK's export level. External debt doubled in this period, from \$20bn to \$40bn. But strong Reagan administration support, superior comparative advantages, and, just in time, a \$4bn loan/credit package tendered to the ROK by Japan under US pressure (and equivalent to one-tenth of outstanding debt obligations), lifted the crisis. The loan package was justified by reference to Japan's security needs—in effect, a trade-off for Prime Minister Nakasone's inability to raise defence spending beyond one per cent of GNP. Japan anted up for Korean security and stability instead. This is, of course, a nice demonstration of my earlier points about regional hegemonic variation.

One thus finds in Latin America and East Asia a decade of development, 1968–78, followed by a decade of astonishing asymmetries, 1978–88. The second period has witnessed another decade of development in East Asia, a decade of decline and even deindustrialization in Latin America. This coincided with a secular decline in world trade, first emerging dramatically in the mid-1970s, which meant that a choice had to be made among the different regions. Thus just as Latin America seemed finally to be emancipating itself from dependency on the United States, it was thrown back to a profound dependency that no one—least of all the cheerleaders for the 'Brazilian miracle'—had anticipated.⁶¹

The East Asian 'Gang of Four' exploited the asymmetries and opportunities to the full, becoming in the 1980s analogous to the OPEC cartel of the 1970s, in their apparent overcoming of Third World dependency. (And thus a retinue of young PhDs traipsed through the East Asian political economy announcing the refutation of *dependencia*.) In reality, the Asian NICs are doing in the 1980s what the Japanese did in the 1930s, after a previous world-ranging 'decade of development' ended in crisis: parlaying regional advantages for heightened position in the world economy.

All this means that James Kurth's fascinating diagnosis of how differential

⁵⁹ See Mike Davis, 'Reaganomics' Magical Mystery Tour', *New Left Review* 149, January–February 1985.

⁶⁰ Whitehead, in Middlebrook and Rico, p. 120.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90–92.

position in the product cycle might help Latin American economies revive is likely to be defeated by the superordinate position of the Asian NICs in the world economy. Kurth argues for a complementarity between US 'competitive assets' like high-tech and service industries, central science and technology, etc., on the one hand, and Latin American traditional industries like textiles, steel and autos—which they could export to the US to grow, and pay back debts.⁶² But unfortunately that complementarity now runs West and East, not North and South, and it is not even clear that US competitive assets are greater than Japan's. Any such North-South complementarity in the Americas would have to come through a dangerous and unpredictable regionalization in the world economy.

I am thus led to explain the *abertura* in more than nationally specific, idiosyncratic terms. I agree with Luciano Martins that Brazilian 'liberalization' was in fact triggered by economic difficulties rather than by any real change 'in the correlation of forces between the regime's protagonists and its opponents'. He views Brazil's economic crisis as analogous to Argentina's military crisis, in serving to catalyse the democratic opening.⁶³ I think that Korean democratization owes more to a controlled process of opening channels and valves for the voicing of excluded interest (or the blowing off of steam), than to a consolidation of stable pluralist representation. Who controls this process? It is the result of conflict and negotiation amongst the state, military and business elite, cushioned and succoured by the United States, with the goal of demobilizing the volatile popular sector. Events in South Korea in the past three years are remarkably similar to those of the Figueiredo regime in Brazil after 1979:⁶⁴ opening the system to the moderate opposition, tolerating strikes, freeing up the press, and allowing exiled anti-regime opponents to return.

Korea has its differences, of course: its leaders and its American boosters hope that the Japanese political system will be the ultimate model of the Korean: one-party rule, with a legitimate but impotent opposition. It is the LDP model that the American Embassy has been proffering to the men who rule South Korea, as preferable to their usual methods. True to the logic, they now advocate a labour party of some sort to accommodate the urban working class and render it politically docile. But Korea belongs to the Third World amalgam, not to the First World, and this is its ultimate similarity with Latin America.

⁶² Kurth, in Middlebrook and Rico, pp. 82–84.

⁶³ Martins, in *Transitions: Latin America*, pp. 82, 91.

⁶⁴ Martins (*ibid.*, p. 85) argues cogently that the Figueiredo regime allowed strikes to happen without repression, as 'a good way to measure their social impact and at the same time to make dissident business representatives understand what a non-authoritarian regime might mean'. Similarly, the regime stimulated 'mild' opposition parties to head off worse, and permitted the return of exile politicians the better to fragment the opposition.

Introduction to Hecht Interview

Over the past quarter-century huge areas of Amazonian forest have been reduced to ashes. The conquest of the Amazon resembles more a scorched earth policy than development. The rate of deforestation has been close to exponential, and it has all been for nothing.

The forests of the Amazon are home to at least two-thirds of the world's organisms. They are known to nourish three million species, and recent research suggests that the number could actually be ten times higher. The destruction now going on will, if it continues, destroy or threaten more than half the world's species of animals and plants over the next twenty-five years.

A holocaust of this type rivals the mass extinctions of dinosaurs and other species in the Cretaceous Period, which changed forever the world and the path of evolution. Many of the plants that will now vanish hold promises of food, medicine and fodder—building blocks in the biological economies of the future. Cures for cancer, skin diseases, AIDS, etc., may be reduced to ashes along with the trees.

In the end the loss of individual species and arcane plants may not cause medical science to collapse. But the incineration of millions upon millions of acres, and of the organisms that live there, is now coming home to everyone in the form of the 'greenhouse effect'. Carbon dioxide from the burning forests traps solar radiation, thus causing the atmosphere to heat up to levels threatening to civilization. Indeed, some scientists say that within a few decades major climatic shifts will turn the North American grain belt into a permanent dust bowl, while the flooding of numerous Pacific islands and Asian coastlines will reduce the area of productive paddy land and probably strain food production capacity.

Susanna Hecht, who trained in biology, economics and soil science, first went to the Amazon Basin in 1975 and began her landmark study of what happens when forests are cut down and converted into rapidly degraded pasture. She has been working in the Amazon for several years, in southern Para and northern Mato Grosso, with the Kayapo Indians, peasant groups, and the rubber tappers in Acre whose leader, Chico Mendes, was recently assassinated. She is a professor at the Graduate School of Planning at UCLA. The following interview took place shortly after the Oaxaca Conference.

A.C.

interview

Alexander Cockburn

Trees, Cows and Cocaine: an Interview with Susanna Hecht

O forest! They cut out your verdant heart.
The grasses, the Brazil nut trees,
the wild beasts already scent the
smell of prison. This we say:
People yearn to be free, so
Who will then be the masters of our
history?

Samba do Quaxá

AC: Maybe we should start with a sense of scale about what is happening to the forests in the Amazon Basin.

SH: If the Amazon Basin were in the United States it would begin in the Californian Sierras and end in New York. It is the largest expanse of tropical rain forest in the world. Last year the Brazilian Space Institute indicated some 12 million acres were on fire and some 50 million acres had been cleared. Clearing rates are now approaching the exponential. The problem is that these forests are not being replaced by any kind of stable land use, since sooner or later these lands end up as pasture in the hands of a small number of landowners. So you have processes of destruction that are quite sharp, but also processes of concentration that are extremely sharp.

The crucial thing to realize is that you can't just say, 'Oh the poor trees—if only we could get a better policy to stop it.' There's real money being made, real people displaced, and real resistance movements are opposing what's going on. It's a frontier area, and things are worked out under the law of the strongest, or, if you will, the law of the jungle.

To stick with vulgar headline material for a moment, what's the relationship between deforestation and oxygen loss?

None, really. A mature forest respire—that is, uses oxygen—and also produces it, so production and consumption of oxygen are more or less in equilibrium. If you cut the forest down and permit younger growth, you actually get more oxygen, since its rate of production of oxygen is greater than its consumption. So the 'oxygen loss' theory is wrong, and people should drop it. What is true is something worse. Take last year, when sixteen million acres were deliberately burned. An extraordinary amount of carbon was released into the atmosphere, and what that can result in, of course, is the greenhouse effect. The magnitude of carbon-dioxide increase, just from what's been going on in the Amazon, is almost twenty-five per cent of global additions.

Another climatic glitch pertains to the cycling of rainfall by the forest. Radioisotope techniques have established that about half of the atmospheric water in Amazonia comes via wind from the Atlantic Ocean, while the other half is from vapour recycled by the trees themselves. So a change in the forest cover will alter the amount of moisture circulating into the atmosphere, and this may already be having a serious effect on climate in adjacent regions outside the Amazon. These general climatic effects are hotly debated, and most projections are still being worked out at the level of modeling. But even so, the initial results are rather disturbing.

What else?

There's the question of genetic diversity. The Amazon forest is the single richest in species diversity, being home to more than two million species, and as you cut down forest with reckless abandon you certainly lose species, even if we can't document when or where. It's difficult to put a value on what 'unknown' species might be worth. After all, a hundred years ago rubber was just another tree in the jungle that produced an uninteresting latex, but that changed overnight with the Industrial Revolution and Mr Goodyear. One in every six prescription drugs we use has a tropical source for its active chemicals; while indigenous people use eighty per cent or more of the species in a given area for everything from birth control to witchcraft, our science recognizes, but still hasn't documented, their significance in terms of medicine, food, forage and so on. There are still a lot of unstudied chemically active plants out there, and what has no value today could be precious in the future. But even if it has no value, why burn off the diversity of the world for no good reason?

Not to mention religious, moral or philosophical questions about the propriety of exterminating species.

Yes. And then there is the little matter of the indigenous and settler folk living there. You've got to remember that these tropical areas are not just vast expanses of ur-forest from the Permian period, sitting there out of time and place and history. Great civilizations inhabited Amazonia. Machu Picchu, after all, is on a tributary of the upper Amazon. There's the Marajo culture at the mouth of the Amazon. Some analysts think that in the Amazon we are only now approaching the population densities of the pre-Columbian eras. The surviving indigenous groups, which have been menaced and slaughtered for centuries, are libraries of knowledge, with experience of managing forest resources in a sustainable and

productive way. Many of the indigenous people, far from being 'outside history', as it were, have been integrated into markets and thus been part of larger economic systems for eons. Long-distance trade did not just begin with Europeans. Amazonian salt routes stretched from the Andes to the Atlantic, and ceremonial stores of medicinals and plants plied the river waters for millennia.

Very far from the old vision of the incompetent and ignorant savage slinking about.

That's all part of a racist romanticism. The forests themselves—because of the way indigenous groups move plants around, manipulate vegetation, plant other things, move germ plasm—are a product of human actions. Now, while people are bemoaning the loss of the rain forest and all that this implies, including social costs that North Americans don't talk or think about very much, there's a far more insidious disaster going on, which has very serious effects on local populations as well as on ecosystems. This is the problem of mercury poisoning.

Mercury poisoning of what?

Land, water, animals and people. Perhaps the major gold rush of this century is happening right now in the Amazon Basin. There have been large gold finds in the Colombian, Venezuelan, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and especially Brazilian Amazon. The Brazilian Amazon is now among the top gold producers in the world market, and the Department of Mining and Energy estimates that anywhere from 300,000 to 500,000 people are at risk from mercury poisoning as a result.

How has this happened?

Besides the very brutal physical conditions in which this mining is carried on—working in water most of the time, taking the dirt into a slurry from which the gold is taken out—there is something called the amalgam process, in which you basically run the slurry over some mercury and the gold precipitates out. You heat the mercury and the gold together, and this means you get mercury vapours—the 'mad hatter' problem. People also put their hands in it, so the three routes by which mercury is ingested into the body—lungs, skin and mouth—are all in play.

Minimata, the famous mercury disaster in Japan, really involved the poisoning of only about four hundred people. In the Amazon we are talking about something of the order of half a million people. Nor is it just a case of direct ingestion. Pots and pans used in the gold refining are often recycled for domestic use throughout communities. Butane canisters used in the mining milieu are moved into cooking areas. Fetuses are highly sensitive to mercury, because it rapidly affects cell division. So in pregnant women and small children, even tiny sub-clinical amounts can have terrible effects. Mercury also goes into rivers, where fish and animals absorb it, and so on up the food chain. One of the major sources of protein for Amazonian people and animals is fish, and there are lots of bitter jokes about this. Areas like the Rio Madeira, which used to be famous for their fishing, are now producing a grisly catch. Downstream from these *garimpos*, the placer-mining areas, there are a large number of awful

indirect effects. Huge areas can be contaminated, such as national parks, reserves, and Indian tribal habitations. For example, among the Kayapo you're beginning to see very high concentrations of mercury in the tissue of children.

And a lot of very sick people.

The victim of mercury poisoning is an erratic, crazy loon, really sick, and there's not much anyone can do or will do for the landless, impoverished population that is most at risk. For every ton of gold produced, another ton of mercury is thrown into the ecosystem. Moreover, much of Brazilian gold production is contraband, so the problem is statistically much understated. I would say that we are beginning to see an environmental disaster of quite extraordinary proportions, the major industrial/environmental catastrophe of the Third World, vastly eclipsing Bhopal. There's nothing comparable. Of course, it also affects things like migratory birds that winter in the tropics, so bird-watchers should get upset about this even if the plight of miners doesn't move them.

Did the same thing happen in the gold rushes in California in the nineteenth century?

Yes, to a certain extent. As for the situation in the Amazon, there's not much you can do—substitute arsenic for mercury, protect the mineworkers a little better, increase the level of mechanization. But mechanized techniques have met with fierce resistance on the part of the goldmines.

A lot of people will argue that civilization and economic development inevitably mean a wipeout of forests and, regrettably, of their inhabitants. After all, the United States and northern Europe were once in the same state.

People would be less upset about deforestation if a lot of the cleared land stayed in production. But in these areas most of the soils are extremely poor. When you cut down the forest and burn it for ash, you may get a couple of productive years, but then it's all over. Later you will have terrible problems with pest invasion, plant diseases, and degraded soil. Of the fifty million acres in the Brazilian Amazon that have been cleared, more than half have already been abandoned as degraded pasture.

The microclimate will also have been changed for the worse. Many tropical forest plants are dispersed by animals, and with the decline of the forest you lose the dispersal agents as well. Seed stocks in the soil are burned. Seeds from the forest do not establish themselves well in the harsh conditions of degraded pastures—so that there is little regeneration of open spaces. With erosion and compaction added to the picture, it's hard to recuperate cleared, degraded land. And then there are the social costs to the peasants, Indians, and kindred inhabitants.

What about the role of peasants? Aren't they the ones whose careless bands are destroying the forests?

A common view has it that peasant pyromania is responsible for most of

the forest destruction in the Amazon and other places in Latin America. The reality is quite the contrary. There may be a short phase of peasant cultivation, but often land that's cleared of forest goes directly to pasture, which degrades very quickly and actually becomes unproductive within about ten years.

Why?

Tropical forest soils are very poor, so the vegetation has adapted complex means of nutrient cycling. That is, virtually all the nutrients move around in the living material. They don't sit in the ground, as they do in the temperate zones. When you cut the forest and burn it, you get a nutrient flush, a fertilizer effect, for the first few years, and then the whole thing leaches, or is eroded away, or some of it is even fixed in some of the clays of the soil. Even with a soil-fertility increase after burning, you often don't hit levels of soil fertility that are adequate for maintaining pasture production. You have soil compaction—water can't get in, seeds can't get in, there's no air down to the roots—and you have erosion. If you drive around or fly over the Amazon a lot, one of the things you notice is the low number of animals compared with the area of pasture. Livestock carry a number of ancillary benefits that have nothing to do with producing meat or calves. Larger forces are at work.

What sorts of forces?

There weren't many major forest clearings in the Amazon until the beginning of the 1970s. In previous cycles, like the rubber boom, people were much more interested in extracted forest products—nuts, latexes, medicines—and had no need to destroy the forest itself. In 1964 the military took over Brazil, and in typical fashion the generals developed an ideology of manifest destiny and national security—the consolidation of the nation's borders, often in remote forest areas facing what the army viewed as potentially hostile Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Guyana and Bolivia. The generals began to open up the region.

The old story. They built roads to isolated areas they wanted to defend, thus rendering them accessible to destruction.

They also had the project of national economic integration. The Amazon Basin is more than fifty per cent of Brazil's national territory. The three generals and three businessmen who evolved this plan were interested in getting groups to invest there. They looked to the dynamic entrepreneurs of southern Brazil and gave them a lot of subsidies: major land concessions, grants of seventy-five per cent of the capital costs of developing the area, subsidized credits amounting to negative interest rates in inflationary conditions, and very juicy tax breaks—up to a hundred per cent for seventeen years—quite a deal if you were, say, *Volkswagen do Brasil*. The idea was that these entrepreneurs would develop modern livestock-producing areas that could feed the meat-hungry Brazilian population, which, under the new military regime, tended to be rather cranky. If the rulers could keep beef prices low, they would be less likely to have the levels of dissidence they were experiencing. They also had hopes of breaking into the international beef market, which was expanding rapidly at the time.

How did these southern entrepreneurs respond?

About 350 big ranches were set up under the tax-holiday programme. By big I mean 500,000 acres, often larger. But of course a lot of smaller entrepreneurs—like 60,000 of them—came rushing along to get a slice of the action and some of the easy credit, and shortly afterwards the government wanted to settle colonists. So the generals set in motion a regional development policy based on cattle, hence deforestation—and colonization and road development, which also fueled a cycle of fantastic land speculation, which led to deforestation. When the Carajas mining project came on line, one of its sub-programmes was to smelt pig iron with furnaces based on forest charcoal. So within the last year a new pressure, very serious, has come into play. This demand for charcoal will increase deforestation rates in the eastern Amazon by more than 100,000 acres per year.

Land titles in the Amazon go back hundreds of years and are hideously complicated. A lot of them are based on above-ground resources, like trees. During the rubber boom you had other land-titling conventions, such as complex state-rental concessions. You had traditional squatter's rights. In other cases people simply claimed an area and swore to shoot anyone setting foot on it. Suddenly, on top of four hundred years of such complications, a modern capitalist land boom entered the picture. There was a huge amount of fraud, since one way of capturing land without the annoying entry costs was to fake a title. The state of Mato Grosso gave away more land than it had—half as much again, in fact. The federal and state authorities handed over the same pieces of land.

Under these conditions one way of consolidating a claim was to cut the trees down—which sometimes created a right not only to the cleared area but also to a multiple of as much as six, in addition to all the tax benefits. The threat of expropriation for agrarian reform was another factor driving the intense rate of deforestation. You began to see professional land speculators clearing land, just to up the value of their investment. They'd sell off the mahogany or other valuable timber, clear the land, and still resell it at triple the value of forested land. Meanwhile the land turned into dead pasture.

In much of the Brazilian Amazon, then, the land was cleared and claimed long before the small peasants arrived. What they were looking at was empty lands on which they squatted—and from which they were driven in cycles of great violence. The same thing happened to the indigenous Indians. Even if their land rights were recognized, it was easy for the ranchers and landowners to drive them out. There were substantial massacres of Indians by various groups, including the bombing of villages. The Indians were simultaneously pitted against the small farmers who were moving deeper into the forest to try to find their own piece of land. And, as always, the Indians were sensitive to Western diseases, just as they have been ever since their contact with the Spaniards, which prompted, remember, the greatest demographic collapse in the history of the world.

So it is a zone with major violence, misery and despair. Why? Because people can't make it. Why not?

For several reasons. People don't live by agriculture alone. They take meat, forage, wood as a little capital source. They run down an important source of income to subsidize their pitiful agricultural efforts. More than sixty-five per cent of colonists engage in wage labour, work for someone else, usually in forced clearing, or go into mining.

All of this reproduces the North American experience pretty closely. Most of the settlers don't make it on the land, and on top of it all, there's no California.

There's no California, and it's a different historical moment. The major product of the northern part of the expanding US frontier—wheat—fed into the industrial development of the Midwest. There were what economists call backward and forward linkages: that is, the demand for higher agricultural productivity to supply urban zones in a labour-poor environment, and for the tools and machinery with which to achieve this, created the base of the industrial Midwest and its auto industry. In the Amazon there are very few regional linkages of this kind. Similarly, although large farms developed in the west and south west of the United States, there was also a real colonist front that was able to survive and reproduce itself, indeed for generations. You also had a Jeffersonian ideology about landed properties and yeoman farmers being the base of democracy. In countries where you don't have democracy in any real sense of the term, and where you really can't make it as an isolated capitalist producer, you don't get any real regional development. Indeed, in the Amazon much more employment and small-scale industrial development are linked to extractive industries—timber, rubber, brazil nut, palm hearts and the like—rather than to agriculture. The current wave of deforestation is thus destroying what is perhaps a laughable industrial base, but one which could be built up, in terms of regional, national and international markets, rather than be wiped out in favour of pasture.

Now, what about the cow—the famous hamburger connection—and the proposition that each burger you eat is the gravestone of a tropical tree? People often think that the most baneful commodity finding its way north from Latin America is cocaine, and perhaps it is. But is it not also true that beef, emblem of the good life, is just as baneful, if not more so, both in terms of its health effects on the consumer and in terms of what it does to the land and social structures in the country producing it? Or is that all nonsense?

Partly. People think that the hamburger connection is what's driving this, and they are wrong. They make the mistake of thinking the deforested pasture is there because people wanted to raise beef and sell it to McDonald's and Burger King. Actually that has been the case in Central America, in Costa Rica and Guatemala, but not in Brazil. In net terms the Amazon Basin is a beef-importing area.

Why do people in the Amazon Basin go into cattle? I've tried to explain that the real issue is land and access to it. The purpose of clearing pasture, all over Latin America, is to make money. And you make money by the sorts of mechanisms I have described: tax holidays, fiscal incentives, subsidized credit, land speculation. Brazil's hyperinflation, running at some 600 per cent a year, is another powerful incentive to get into real property, like land. Also, government surveys indicate that there's still a great

deal of mineral wealth under the land, including gold. So if you clear the land of trees, you get rights to sub-surface royalties—a particularly important factor in the states of Para and Rondonia. For all these reasons—rising land prices, inflation, subsidies, sub-surface rights, land claims, access to potential capital gains, avoidance of expropriation—forests are chopped down. You have to look at the local forces and not take the imperial view that the beefeaters of the United States are calling the tune. Indeed, if you look at the value per acre generated by livestock in the Amazon Basin as opposed to that generated by other types of land use, it has the lowest rate of return if you produce beef, but gives stellar performances if you add in the ancillary benefits.

So my theory is crazy?

I said 'partly'. Your argument that livestock is more devastating to local economics than coca is absolutely correct, and coca production is an important part of the story of the Amazon Basin and the future of forests. Livestock is indeed devastating to local economics. It doesn't absorb any labour. It monopolizes land. It marginalizes populations that may have developed sustainable land uses. Coca, by contrast, is a wonderful crop. It is well adapted to Amazon conditions. As the economists say, it has a comparative advantage for production in tropical zones, and in fact it was first domesticated by the Indians of the upper Amazon. It is well adapted to intercropping with agricultural and tree crops. Unlike many perennial crops coca begins to produce within six months; and as it can be propagated by cuttings or seeds, it is easy to move around. You have a good cash crop almost immediately—which for poor peasant is rather interesting.

So it's an ecologist's dream crop?

Coca has some incredible advantages for peasants, and if you look at the failure and outmigration of colonists in the Amazon Basin, the lowest rates are in the cocaine-producing areas. Coca is profitable enough to pay for inputs like fertilizer; it has a high labour demand, it creates a lot of local employment, and the pay is pretty good. Coca producers are not among the world's most exploited labour. Indeed, in coca-producing areas you have well-paid day-labourers. This in turn engenders effective local demand for agricultural foodstuffs, which makes it possible to develop a reasonable local agricultural economy. First-stage processing of coca is rather simple, so you have local processing and incipient industrialization.

More good news for the little guy.

It's a model of what a cash crop should look like. Livestock gets you a few dollars an acre; cocoa, maybe \$150 to \$200 an acre; a short-term crop of maize, maybe \$150 an acre. Coca gets you \$5000 to \$10,000 an acre.

No contest.

Right. This is the rational peasant speaking. So here we have an extremely interesting crop in terms of local, sustainable Amazon development in the

humid tropics. Maybe there's erosion when you grow it on hillsides, but that's true of any crop. And because local processing is so simple, it's easy to break monopolies. With no monopolies in the first-stage processing, you have a lot of little local middlemen, local commerce, and so on. You have your dream Jeffersonian farmers out there.

Well, the problem is that it's illegal. Also, coca is grown in areas that tend to be under the control of revolutionary groups and where rather unsympathetic Mafia types also roam around. The mere presence of these movements means that coca areas become focuses of counter-insurgency, often under the guise of drug control. These areas are, increasingly, zones of violence. Look at the structure as a whole. You have the insurgents relying on the peasants; you have the military relying on state power, which is financed by the state and by international funds; and then you have the marketing organ, which is the cocaine Mafia with its own private armies. The result is a free-for-all with no hegemony for any one group sufficient to control the region, though a rising coalition between the Mafia and right-wing military groups has resulted in systematic assaults on insurgent movements, at least in the Colombian case. This class alliance, by the way, is utterly predictable—mafiosi who garner the fruits of those who labour have much more in common with coffee barons than peasants.

So, because of geographic remoteness and the adaptation of coca to the region, you get a big explosion on the supply side. On the demand side, the eighties in the US have brought increasing economic misery, social disintegration, and hence a desire for cocaine and crack at the bottom of the social tier as well as a cocaine-smorting psychology of manic acquisition at the top.

The result is an economic explosion in some particularly devastated Third World economies. Cocaine agriculture is the development policy for these countries in a very fundamental way.

So cocaine is a consequence of Philip II and Milton Friedman. Take that, George Bush.

You're looking at cocaine in too much of an international perspective. From the local perspective it has been literally and symbolically important to these cultures for thousands of years. We should also remember that everything in those coca-producing countries, from right to left, rests on this huge economic base. We are talking about something that generates truly vast sums of money: Andean coca exports are worth some \$60 billion. The Andean flank of the Amazon Basin is run by the coca trade. It creates more real jobs and more exports than anything else.

How come cocaine suddenly took off? It's like sugar and coffee at the dawn of the capitalist period.

You mean how did sugar go from being in the dowry of queens to being in everybody's tea? One thing about cocaine is that its production was itself rationalized at the end of the 1970s. In my opinion the cocaine Mafia put some really good agronomists into the field—a process similar to that which occurred in 18th and 19th-century sugar production. You know, agriculture is not just what you grow in the ground. There's always a

bunch of research going on around it, and it's a dynamic process, with manipulation of the ecosystem and germ plasm going on all the while. Cocaine is the perfect model of how a good technology works. Obviously there were major improvements in taking something that was grown in gardens for home consumption and making it a field crop. You can't do this without shifts in the productive technology, training in when to apply fertilizer, and so on.

Coca production doesn't destroy rain forests?

On its own, very little. It's produced on small plots in the forests, usually less than one hectare. Small plots are important for eluding the military. You don't destroy vast areas to grow it, and unlike other crops it's stable because it pays for the inputs and labour of intensive management.

Do a line and save a tree!

Up to a point, yes. What tends to be destructive is that, all of a sudden in a coca-producing area, people whose ambition in life was to own a mule now find themselves having, in their terms, a lot of money—though it would hardly keep a welfare mother going in the United States. What do they invest in? Well, historically, if you are a peasant, you invest in land-related things. So one of the things that has fueled livestock in these areas is superprofits from coca, since there is a dearth of other investments. In the Guaviare, in Colombia, for example, there are 12,000 acres producing coca and 330,000 for livestock.

From coca to the bank to land to our old enemy, the cow. Do a line, fell a tree. Anyway, to sum up: we have a disappearing forest, screwed-up politics, and an economy whose expression is cocaine, gold, minerals and timber. We have a planet being greenhouseed, genetic diversity being eroded, and native peoples being driven off their land and drowned in crazy dam projects dreamed up by the construction industry. What could change all this?

The problem is that in the United States the 'environmental crisis' is described mostly in terms of pollution (acid rain and so on) or in terms of aesthetics—the romantic experience of nature being spoiled by the presence of other people, buzz saws, or unseemly visual bric-à-brac. Many North American environmentalists thus miss the real social and economic factors involved in the destruction of the forests in Latin America—factors which involve social justice and the dealings of people with people.

I should add a word about some of the scientists working in this field who are inclined to see forests sans people as a place where men are men, and the locals are native bearers. Their publications sometimes read like highly educated versions of *Soldier of Fortune*. A kind of machismo leads these scientists to go like tanks through local Indian and settler communities which have seen jungle boys of one sort or another for four hundred years. Such communities often have excellent knowledge of local ecology, etc., although until quite recently it has been largely overlooked by people who relate more to feline breeding systems or bat systematics than to local human populations.

They're the kind of people who end up saying, as an answer to deforestation, 'let's

have a couple of national parks and some debt swaps' (i.e., a system of bonds whereby a country's debt is rebought by conservation groups as a mild form of debt relief for conservation).

The trouble is that much of the conservation approach never addresses other factors: for example, there are people who want to live in those national parks, and have lived there for decades. Resource conservation and people are not mutually exclusive. If you look at Landsat photos of the Amazon Basin, you find that Indian reserves and extractive production zones are among the few areas without a lot of deforestation, because those populations in general protect the resources from which they live. Moreover, the analysis has to rest on the real battle between those who make their living by destroying forests and those who make their living from the forest. Parks are hard to defend without an unbelievable military apparatus. Unsurprisingly, many parks have been invaded by peasants, goldminers, and so on.

The other thing is that the conservation movement really developed in the United States from a nineteenth-century romantic view of the ambit and uses of nature. They said it was 'for beauty, health, and permanence', and that kind of conservation strategy won't work in Latin America. It's important to have national parks, but that implies tourism, people ambling in and out of them. There isn't much. There's little to see unless you're trained to see it. Zillions of trees. It's hot, it's full of biting insects, and you've probably got some kind of intestinal parasite if you're a standard tourist. You get to walk around, but there are not many flowers. It's difficult to see animals, but you can still be terrified of snakes the entire time. So if you're looking for a great tourist experience, the tropical rain forest really doesn't provide it, except in the form of glamorous cocktail conversation later, or the kind of drivel written by people like Redmond O'Hanlon. There are many beautiful sights, but it's not easy tourism. So conservation is important, but the rationale behind it has to be a little bit different.

What else could be done, aside from the untouched-national-park idea?

You can have indigenous reserves where local people manage the area. The problem is that these reserves would be under great pressure. Every time there's a good mineral find on Indian lands, there's a quick shuffling of the borders. Another option is to give usufruct rights to people engaged in petty extraction—palm hearts, rubber, brazil nuts etc.—and to take the land out of the market. The key is to help those who need the forest to survive. There's a bunch of other nostrums. Stop building roads—but even if the state doesn't have to build them any more, private entrepreneurs will do it just to jack up land values. Governments claim national security, just as they did when they built the interstate system here in the 1950s. These processes are under way, and you can't just turn the clock back on twenty years of regional development. It's a little late. Then they say: make better policy. But policies get made for political reasons, and even though the credit for land clearance has shrunk, deforestation is now worse than ever.

I don't believe in technofixes, but there are techniques like intercropping

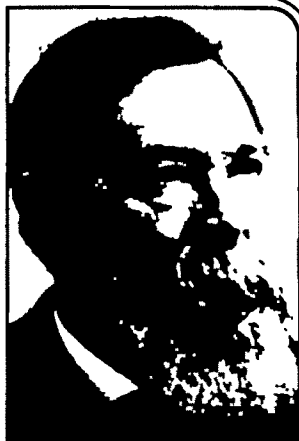
or agroforestry which allow cleared land to remain in production. Then there are the political battles that have to be fought. The resistance groups in the Amazon are many and varied—the classic example being the Acre rubber tappers. You could say that the Amazon is a kind of refuge for issues unresolved in the national context, like agrarian reform and the maldistribution of wealth and power. The final battle for the Amazon will be played out in political terms, in ways that we are only now beginning to see. While Chico Mendes was certainly the best-known of the rural organizers, there are hundreds of them. And many, like him, are assassinated—not because they want to save the Amazon forests or are concerned about the greenhouse effect, but because they want to protect the resource base essential to the survival of their constituents.

What can a North American do? Or maybe, first, we should remember what a North American did. It was the Kennedy administration that bolstered the military elites in Latin America in the early sixties, thus helping to prompt the coup in Brazil that started the whole cycle.

Yes, you can blame a lot of it on JFK and his successors. But what can North Americans do now? Give money to the Environmental Defense Fund, the World Wildlife Fund or other non-governmental organizations that deal with these questions in a progressive way. There are some pretty good debt swaps which are not entirely idiotic. People can also screech and holler when there's talk of 'massive interdiction' in the coca-producing areas. A war on drugs should be on the traffickers, who include international bankers, not on the producers, who are peasants and fugitives from a dynamic inside their own country set up in part by the United States. You can also pressure the multilateral banks that help finance baneful investment.

But on the whole, if you want to know the truth, there's not much a North American or European can do, since the crisis is generated by factors internal to the region. Today it's not quite the imperial world that everyone imagines, where a North American has only to stamp a foot. But deforestation and environmental degradation are social, not biological, processes. They can be reversed by social trends and by social movements. So, support these insurgencies and don't despair.

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Chico Mendes: Chronicle of a Death Foretold

Where do good ideas come from? Do they fall from the sky? No. They come from social practice.
Mao

Deforestation in the Amazon is a big problem, and not just for the trees, or those who panic about the greenhouse effect. It may well be that it is a matter of global life or death, but for many who live in the Amazon, when trees fall, people die. Sometimes they die because their means of living is destroyed; sometimes because they resist those who do the cutting. So was it with Chico Mendes. He was assassinated on 22 December 1988, shot point-blank in the head and the heart. Chico was the head of the rubber tappers union, the charismatic leader of former debt peons: rubber tappers, brazil-nut gatherers and petty traders who live in the far forests of the Brazilian state of Acre, at the border of Bolivia. Who he was, and why he ended his days with his brains splattered across his patio, tell us a great deal about what deforestation means for the people who live and die in the Amazon. To grasp how

important Chico Mendes was to the dispossessed of Acre and the Amazon, one must understand that he sought to free landless rubber tappers from the relentless savagery of debt peonage, a vile holdover from the nineteenth century. Chico also sought to ensure that, once free, tappers were protected from the ravages of late twentieth-century 'development' which, by turning the forests to ashes, transformed tappers' lives into dust. In the process he made many enemies among landowners and their minions. Death threats were his daily fare.

The Rubber Boom and Debt Peonage

Acre's heyday began at the end of the nineteenth century when the industrial demand for natural rubber sent prices skyrocketing, and masters and debt peons pushing deeper and deeper into the forest. In the Acre river valley they found the richest rubber stands in all that great forest, and Acre's white history began. Just as tea and sugar wended their way from opposite sides of the earth into British lives, the need for rubber for tyres, shoes and machines extended quickly and brutally into some of the remotest areas of the planet. Suddenly the region went from being a refuge for nineteenth-century naturalists to become the centre of a mercantile system based on debt peonage. While debt peonage was not in any way new to the region—together with slavery it had been the primary means by which agricultural and extractive products such as dyes, quinine and rosewood oil were provided for markets—it assumed a particularly violent form as Indians and impoverished whites milked the trees for latex. Debt peonage in its New World form has no consoling overlay of traditional rights and obligations in the European sense. As oppressive as formal slavery, it has been one of the most savage forms of labour deployment and monopolistic market control ever to have existed outside concentration camps. Peons not only generate the product which they must sell to a particular patron at a monopolistic price. Unlike in slavery, where in principle the master had at least to feed slaves or provide the possibility of agricultural plots, Amazon debt peons were forbidden agriculture and forced to *buy* their own subsistence from the patrons, who thus made profits on all sides. By hampering any form of agricultural production, and insisting on monopoly, the patrons could thus ensure the reproduction of peonage. But given the regional shortage of labour, they also had to force compliance to these marketing structures through personalized and capricious forms of brutality. No bureaucracy or faceless violence here. It is rather the naked face of personal power.

Chico Mendes, himself a debt slave, began his career as an organizer when he witnessed several murders by patrons. Rubber tappers often try clandestinely to sell small amounts of rubber (less than ten kilos, known as *principios*) to petty traders or *marreteiros*, for cash or for items like medicine that are not available at the patron's store. This practice was unwelcome to patrons, who naturally preferred monopoly systems. Those caught selling in this way had strings of *principios* tied to their body, were doused in gasoline and set afire. Chico organized the households in the rubber estate where he was enslaved to sell to *marreteiros* en masse, so that the murderous individual reprisals would become impossible. By collective actions that emphasized the tappers' rights to sell when and where they would, to farm for their subsistence if they would, and by

encouraging non-payment of rent to patrons, Chico challenged more than debt peonage. By asserting the rights of labour and human dignity over the claims of property, he drew battle lines that assured the enmity of landowners, and—ultimately—his own violent death.

Until very recently the debt peonage system remained more or less intact. In the early part of this century, the rubber economy generated spectacular riches, but boom was followed by bust when the pilfered seeds of rubber were transported to England, and thence to Malaysia which was free of the disease that limited dense planting of *Hevea* in the Amazon. Faced with efficient British and Dutch plantation management, the production of the Amazon was soon eclipsed. Consigned to the oblivion of ceaseless toil in a world indifferent to the producers of tropical necessities, the Amazon rubber economy continued to supply this commodity to a national economy in which rubber barons had been able to argue effectively for trade protection. Yet the attempts to establish plantations continually met with failure as leaf blight disease ravaged the pure stands of *Hevea*. Fordlandia, a vast plantation begun in the twenties, was Henry Ford's grandiose attempt to assure supplies of latex for tyres and to drive down the international price. The plantation's failure stands as testimony to the difficulty of commercial cultivation of this forest plant in the area where it co-evolved with all its biological enemies. Thus, credits to the rubber sector rarely translated into investment in production. Indeed the major technical advance was the introduction of the Malaysian tapping knife. Funds to the rubber sector financed marketing, and occasionally processing, and remained firmly in the hands of the rubber elites.

The outbreak of World War Two once more fired the dreams of the rubber barons. With Asia out of reach of the Allies, natural Amazonian rubber became central to the war effort. Under the Washington accords, the US financed the revitalization of rubber estates, paid for labour recruitment—the so called *exercito de borracha*, or rubber army—to supply the airplane tyres and condoms so necessary to the Allied effort. The export and sale of rubber became a government monopoly, with marketing credits and guaranteed prices for the barons. The new US presence introduced modern formal credit structures which enabled the barons to borrow from banks instead of commercial mercantile houses, although such funds were not invested to any great degree in the improvement of production in Amazonia. While Amazonian rubber enjoyed an increased market share for a brief period after the war, tappers carried out their tasks of collecting and processing latex in the same way that they had for almost a century, life trickling on much as rubber sap filled the cups set to catch the latex from the wounded trees. For the barons, however, the rubber economy was clearly decadent, and as Asian and African plantations expanded, their future was ever more in doubt.

In 1964 the military seized power and radically modified Amazonian development policy to make the region the target of enormous programmes of 'national integration'—infrastructure development, fiscal incentives, colonization programmes. It also brought about a restructuring of both the regional development and financial agencies. By 1967 the Amazon bank rubber programme set up during World War Two was largely bankrupt. Beset by international competition and the growing use

of synthetic rubber, the *seringalistas* or rubber barons were unable to repay their debts. The monopolistic pricing system organized by the Brazilian state was liberalized to reflect international realities. As some estate owners now began to abandon their direct interest in rubber, it was sometimes possible for tappers and their families both to begin production of subsistence crops and to sell to a burgeoning class of petty traders. A socially and ecologically viable use of the land was emerging from the ruins of debt peonage in the Acrean forests, particularly those near the village of Xapuri where, since the early 1970s, the rural workers union had been organizing the dispersed tapper plantations.

Acre is very far from Brasilia, yet the decisions made in the capital by a few generals were to change the way of life in Acre more than the rubber bust and two world wars had done. To understand the next period requires an appreciation of Amazonia's complex land history, and of the contemporary role of livestock in the region.

Land Policy in Amazonia

The issue of land-titling in Amazonia—typically involving the most brazen fraud—would be hilarious if it were not for the human and ecological disaster that it implies. Not only has control over land and titles shifted between the federal and central state levels, but legislation and covert policy have had to address the conditions of state appropriation, user rights and user appropriation, and protection of property in a context of severe maldistribution of resources and simmering violence.

Generalized land markets are relatively new to the region. In what is probably the most rapid and immense enclosure process in history, more than fifty million hectares have shifted from public to private hands in Amazonia in the last twenty years. Acre is the classic case in point. In 1971, 75 per cent of the state's area was formally in *terras devolutas* or state lands. Technically these were lands which could have been claimed in the past through land grants or usufruct leases but were never formally surveyed, and which had thus reverted to the state. But by 1975, four years later, 80 per cent of Acre was privately owned.

The Amazonia land frenzy, which first appeared in the mid-1960s, has sustained an extraordinary boom in land prices for more than two decades. Far more important than any natural endowment in this vertiginous cycle of speculation have been such factors as formal title, proximity to roads and official classification as a growth pole, as well as macro-economic elements such as inflation rates, levels of credit subsidy, fiscal incentives, and the limited investment opportunities in other areas of the economy. In fact, land in Amazonia has been one of the best possible investments, given that projected returns on capital have been based more on government inducements than on estimates of future production. In this land rush, however, there were complications which made Amazonia rife with conflict and bloodshed. Land titles ranged from the royal *s sesmarias* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—whose scale was as vast as their defining surveys were sketchy—to simple squatters' rights. Since, moreover, archives routinely disappeared or went up in flames, the confusion and potential for fraud and competing claims were

enormous. In principle, under the land statute of 1964 and the laws of 1980, those who can show that they have occupied land for five years in productive use can assert a legal claim to so-called squatters' rights. This issue of user rights versus other forms of title became central in the rubber tappers' struggles as large landowners began to clear Acrean forests. The final truth of land claim in Amazonia is *a lei do mais forte*—the law of the jungle.

In Mato Grosso, one of the most colourful cases, the government actually issued titles to an area fifty per cent greater than the entire state. In such situations, the surest way to claim land and all its rights and obligations was to clear as large an area as quickly as possible—legally recognized evidence of 'effective use' that minimizes the possibility of later expropriation. In Amazonia this usually meant that huge tracts were given over to cattle production, often displacing Indians, peasants and other previous forest-dwellers. Indeed cattle pasture, which goes out of production in less than ten years, generated land values that exceeded those of the forest by thirty per cent.

Livestock and Destruction

Throughout the Brazilian Amazon, livestock became the definitive land use and occupied more than 95 per cent of the area cleared. At a very low level of productivity—one animal per hectare—the costs of production were rarely met by the market value. But the subsidized credits and exploding land values generously compensated for this risible production performance. Latifundia covered the landscape, generating the worst structure of land distribution in all Brazil. While the new *latifundistas*, waving their fraudulent titles, sprawled their estates over holdings the size of kingdoms, violent disputes broke out between people who had occupied and used forest sites for decades—or, in the case of Indians, millennia—and those ranchers and land grabbers whose fortunes were tied to clearing them. Impoverished migrants from southern Brazil, attracted by the dreams of the landed, found themselves embroiled in these conflicts as they too began to claim part of these estates through the only means available to them: forest clearing.

Desperate rubber barons, underpriced land, road development—it all added up to a speculator's dream. In the period from 1972 to 1976, land prices in the state of Acre increased by 1000 to 2000 per cent, and more than a third of its territory, some five million hectares, changed hands. Of this, however, a mere 81 titles, totalling 7700 hectares, were formally regulated by the state land agency, INCRA.

Meanwhile, back on the rubber trails, the barons' despair lit the first glimmerings of freedom for the tappers. But just as the patron/debt peon system became enfeebled, and autonomous or free rubber tappers were able to farm and buy and sell at will, they found themselves pitted against ranchers and land speculators. By 1982 more than 100 per cent of the state had been sold, with some *municípios* boasting that 160 per cent or more of their land area had claim. Over 84 per cent of holdings in Acre are now classified as latifundia. Forests inevitably began to fall, and tappers who had been working a particular area were evicted by stockmen. The

methods varied from the classic burning-down of houses and crops to a more legalistic form in which individual tappers were invited to the patron's rooms and convivially greeted by a lawyer, rancher and, of course, the patron himself, each with gun in hand, and encouraged to sign away any claim to the lands they had worked all their lives.

These evictions and the accompanying terror were another critical factor in the formation of the rubber tappers union. The deforestation had to stop, not because tappers were concerned about the greenhouse effect, or species loss, but because the cruel ecology of Amazonian development threatened their own extinction. Chico Mendes and other members of the union began to develop a technique known as *empate* or standoff—a combination of appeals, including class solidarity and intimidation, to persuade contract labourers to halt deforestation. In other cases, women and children would be sent unarmed to challenge the shotgun guards at clearing sites. Such events were mostly non-violent, but the tappers frequently had to face the weapons of gunlingers and even the military police. Their direct action has been crucial in slowing the impetus of deforestation, but they have also brought legal pressure to bear on land-owners and federal and local agencies. In particular, the union has tried to invoke the Brazilian forestry code, which prohibits the cutting of brazil-nut and rubber trees, and to pressure the forestry service to check whether the ranchers have clearing licences. Since deforestation proceeds with great rapidity, and virtually no one has permission to cut, the forestry service has found itself under attack by rubber tappers and environmental lawyers for dereliction of duty.

Extractive Reserves

With land conflicts erupting throughout the region, it became clear to the rubber tappers that some form of long-term safeguard would also be necessary, securing the resource base through a land-use model with the same legal status as that of colonization plots or ranching lands. Taking the model of a rubber estate, which is divided into several *colocações* or family smallholdings, the rubber tappers union began to press for the development of extractive reserves that would recognize the use rights of the local population. Once tenure was assured, the extractive reserves would also incorporate health and education facilities, small rubber-processing factories, and even some manufacturing. The profoundly radical idea behind this campaign was that the holdings would not be privately owned but would rest upon collective 'condominium rights' or long-term leases from the state—a form that would assure sustainable management and curb any tendency of tappers to participate in speculation. This emphasis on collective *ajuda* types of ownership was regarded as socialistic by many of the more right-wing elements in the national rural economy such as the União Democrática Rural (UDR), an organization of land-owners and ranchers which has been widely implicated in vigilante atrocities throughout Brazil.

The first national meeting of the rubber tappers' union, held in 1985, judged that extractive reserves were central to the political strategy, and indeed physical survival, of its members. A subsequent alliance between the union and environmental groups helped the astute campaign to

gather momentum, and acute political lobbying with the aid of an unusual non-governmental organization—the Institute for Amazon Studies (IEA), headed by Marie Alligrette—resulted in a major legislative advance. Alligrette, an anthropologist who had done her thesis on rubber tappers in Acre, became in effect the political liaison for the union, coordinating pressure within the Ministry of Agrarian Reform to incorporate the reserves as a new model of spatial occupation, with status equal to that of the more traditional livestock and colonization strategies. In July 1987 the Minister of Agrarian Reform signed the legislation that permitted *assentamentos extrativistas* to be established in lands expropriated under the agrarian reform. Two weeks later he was blown up in suspicious circumstances aboard a plane in the Carajas zone of eastern Amazonia. But massive change in the dynamic of Amazonian development—change that would favour the poor and conserve the resource base—was now a real possibility rather than a dream.

Environmentalists in Brazil and in the international community soon realized that the extractive reserves were among the most important strategies for forest conservation. While many of their constituents might have been horrified at the idea that their organizations were supporting a radical union, they could clearly see the benefits for the habitat of overwintering birds and large felines dear to the hearts of North American environmentalists. The concerted lobbying of groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund, the World Wildlife Fund and the Wildlife Federation began to bring Chico Mendes and his organization to international attention. Thus it was that in 1987 Chico was awarded a major United Nations prize and honoured as one of the Global 500 (an annual citation of the most significant crusaders for world environmental protection). This caused a certain consternation in Brazil, as virtually no journalists or 'official scientists' had any idea who this rubber tapper was whom the rest of the world was adopting as the saviour of Brazil's tropical forests. Extractive reserves also caught the eye of multilateral development agencies, which began to press for this kind of land-use model in their Amazonian project negotiations.

Perhaps at least as important, in that same year, was the development among rubber tappers and indigenous peoples of a Forest Peoples Alliance, which signed a pact for the defence of the forests and the land rights of forest people. In spite of the history of conflict between Indians and tappers, Jaime Araujo, a member of the governing board of the tappers' council, pointed out that 'we have the same way of life, and the same enemies: the rancher and the logger. The isolation in which we live as tappers and Indians intensifies the solidarity among men and reinforces the bonds of family, friendship and cordiality between people.'

The Gathering Storm

In February 1988, after a workshop on environment, politics and development that included rubber tappers, Indians, national and international scientists, local government types, and members of political parties and non-government organizations, governor Flaviano Melo announced the creation of the first extractive reserve at São Luis de Remanso. A bitter battle had taken place earlier in the week in the Agrarian Reform offices

among members of the Rubber Tappers Council, state agencies, non-government organizations, researchers and representatives of funding agencies over the exact sites where these reserves should be established. For the rubber tappers, it was urgent that the areas of intense conflict, such as Seringal Cachoeira, should receive protection, since these were under immediate threat of deforestation and the inhabitants were being systematically harassed. Given the murderous temperament of the current landowner, Darly Alves, bloodshed was likely to occur in the summer when the clearing season began.

Cachoeira, near the rubber union office in Xapuri, was a well-organized area, more than a third of whose tappers had been evicted from other holdings, often more than once. They were not going to be driven out again. For their part, the government representatives were interested in the least conflictual course in which the political shrapnel would be thinnest. Thus they advocated sites that could be easily expropriated, and were remote and not particularly organized. The compromise was São Luis de Remanso, about two hours from Rio Branco, already expropriated, close, and not particularly organized.

With research for the first reserve well under way, it was clear that the summer of 1988 would be different from others. The torrential floods that had ravaged Acre and destroyed more than thirty per cent of its agriculture had given way to the unremitting tropical sun of the deforestation zones. The contracts for land clearing were signed, the gunslingers hired. From their ranch at Seringal Cachoeira, Sr. Darly and his son—themselves migrants from the state of Parana which, two decades earlier, had witnessed bloody conflicts for the coffee lands—prepared to claim Cachoeira for their own. At the same time, the rubber tappers claimed it as an extractive reserve.

When Sr. Darly sent in the deforestation teams to begin work near Cachoeira, they were met with an *empate* of several hundred men. Guarded by a private army, Darly's men began to cut down the rubber forest. At this juncture four hundred tappers invaded the office of the Brazilian Forest Development Institute (IBDF) in Xapuri, asserting that Darly had no licence to cut or to burn, and demanding that the IBDF halt a flagrant violation of the letter and intent of the law. One evening in August, the tappers were attacked at the sit-in and two were wounded. The Federal police were called in to resolve the case, but with no effect. In the meantime, what was to be the final act of the play was set in motion. As a national meeting in Curitiba considered how to train government workers and extension agents to work with forest peoples on the establishment of extractive reserves, it became clearer to the UDB, which had never recoiled from assassination, that Chico Mendes would have to die. The UN medals and international attention could not protect him. After all, he was interested not so much in trees as in justice.

Who are Darly Alves and his son? Who were they in Parana, and how and why did they come to the Amazon? Long a refuge for lawless adventurers, the Amazon does not readily lend itself to questions about a person's provenance. The past is past. In this case, however, lawyers hired by the IEA discovered that Darly's history, and fortune, had been made out

of violent land conflicts. More to the point, he had once been charged with murder and had escaped from Parana to avoid serving his sentence. Darly was thus in violation not only of the forest laws but of homicide laws as well. When this became known, Chico accused the Federal Police of failing in their duty, since a judge in Parana had already issued a warrant for Darly's arrest and extradition papers had been prepared to bring him back from his new abode. Throughout the autumn Chico kept up the pressure, demanding to know why the Federal Police were ambling about in a daze while the forests were burning, bullets flying. Darly went into hiding on a remote part of his ranch, but he let it be known that he would surrender to the police only after he had killed Chico Mendes.

The rains began and everyone hoped, as one does in the Amazon, that they would cool things down as they did the deforestation fires. It is hard to move, hard to see, wet and muddy. Under the cloak of the rainstorms that force one's vision into narrower scope, and the hypnotic power of rain falling on roofs and plant leaves, Darly's hired gun was able to move into the shelter of the overhang of Chico's house, and on the darkest day of the year, the 22nd of December, to blast Chico's heart out.

Chico himself once said: 'If my death would advance our struggle, it would be worth it to die. But history teaches otherwise. I want to live. A demonstration and a funeral will not save the Amazon.'



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Poetry and Politics: A Conversation with Stuart Hood

Erich Fried was not only a distinguished and prolific poet—he said once in a characteristic phrase that he wrote poems the way rabbits have babies—but a novelist, essayist and translator of Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas and Eliot. These achievements have been recognized throughout Europe but are only now beginning to be appreciated in Britain. Fried was remarkable for the fact that as an emigré writer he contrived not to lose his great command of his native language and not to be cut off from social and political developments in Germany and Austria, where he made noteworthy interventions on the Left and had a readership of a size few British poets could aspire to. His career as a poet went through various stages, which included bold experiments with language, but at all times he was essentially a political poet for the simple reason that he was a person who thought and lived politically. Fried was born in Vienna in 1921 into a middle-class Jewish family. As remarkable a young boy as he was an adult—he was a child-prodigy actor—he was precociously aware of the political events of the twenties and thirties: Bloody Friday 1927, for instance, when the Viennese police shot down Socialist demonstrators, the street-fighting under the right-wing regime of Chancellor Dörfuss, and the Anschluss in 1938. It was with the events of 1927 that our conversation began.

I first became politically aware in 1927. It was the year of the Schattendorf murder trials in Vienna—trials of proto-Nazis who had killed an invalid and an apprentice on their way to take part in a Socialist demonstration. The judge, who was much more in sympathy with the murderers than with the victims, had acquitted them on two occasions and now the case was coming up in the Palace of Justice, the highest instance. For their part, the workers in Vienna said: 'If they acquit them again there will be trouble', and they were acquitted again and next day there was a big demonstration and the police intervened. There were fights between police and demonstrators. Two or three policemen had their uniforms taken off them and were sent away in their underpants—it was summer. And then the fighting became serious. One policeman and 86 workers were killed and the Palace of Justice went up in smoke. This was called in Vienna *blutiger Freitag*—bloody Friday—and I happened to be in town with my mother. The streets were closed and we couldn't get away, so I saw through the shop-window of acquaintances where we had taken refuge a number of stretchers with dead and wounded. One also heard some shooting and, I think, saw some smoke though we didn't know what was burning at the time. I was tremendously excited by all this and of course listened to the grown-ups speaking about the Nazis who had killed these people and so on. Then Karl Kraus made a poster and put it on the bill-boards addressed to the Viennese Chief of Police, Herr Schober: '*Ich fordere Sie auf abzutreten*'—'I ask you to stand down' or literally 'I call you up (*auf*) to stand down (*ab*)' and this '*auf*' and '*ab*' impressed me very much, as it were, graphically; I'd only shortly before learnt to read. At Christmas when I had to recite a poem in the school-hall, which we shared with two other schools, I heard someone say 'Dr Schober is among the guests'. So I stepped forward and said: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I can't recite my Christmas poem because I have just heard that Dr Schober is among the guests. I was there on Bloody Friday and saw the stretchers with the dead and wounded and can't recite the poem in front of him.' So Schober jumped up and, followed by his entourage, left and banged the door. My teacher, who was a left-wing Social Democrat, embraced me but my father said: 'I won't have this. The boy is swimming about in the wake of Communism!' I didn't know what that meant. We had the luxury edition of Meyer's *Konversationslexikon* but only the first six volumes, which didn't have *Geschlechtsorgane* (sexual organs) far less *Kommunismus*. So I had to wait till we went to an aunt of mine, who didn't have the luxury edition but at least had all the volumes. There I looked up 'Communism' and then, thanks to the frequent references: socialism, Marx, Engels, socialist legislation etc. So I owed the basis of my political education to my father and Meyer's *Konversationslexikon*.

During the elections before Dollfuss came to power there had been anti-Semitic propaganda—a baby with a very bent Jewish nose reading Marx and the Bible in its cradle and so on. I was thirteen in 1934. I was speaker for my form and the democratic institution of 'the speaker' was ruled out just like co-education. First Communists were prohibited and then the Social Democrats published a leaflet which said: 'There is a rumour that we wish to attack democracy. The truth is that the workers fight nobody, attack nobody, but when the old laws are broken and freedom is in danger then the workers will take up arms.' I thought there would be fighting, and there was a few days later when Dollfuss shelled the Viennese workers' settlements.

Dolfuss paved the way for the Nazis—also among the youngsters—because the official line was 'Austria is the second German state; we must march separately but strike together.' Then why not go straight for *ein Reich, ein Führer*? When the Nazis came my parents were arrested and I tried to form a group among my Jewish school-fellows to collect books from frightened Jewish friends who were burning their Marxist and anti-Nazi literature. We collected such books and brought them to workers' flats and to municipal housing where there were Socialists and Communists who would look after them for a couple of years. We also made mistakes, like bringing Trotsky on the 1905 revolution to a Communist, who probably didn't like it very much. I was firmly resolved to do something against the Nazis. What we did was extremely clumsy and childish. It came from a good feeling of not just sitting down.

Many of my schoolfellows were Zionists and when the Nazis came I admired the right-wing Zionist group, the Thal, because the Hitler Youth always wanted to attack them but they fought back cleverly. But I didn't agree with them. I thought the attitude of the Zionists to the Arabs or to the Palestinians was absolutely hopeless. I was never attracted by that.

My father was killed by the Nazis—not for political reasons but because my mother tried to ensure that money belonging to her boy-friend's cousin was smuggled out of the country. She and my father were arrested and my father was kicked to death.

In 1938 Fried left Austria as a teenager and came to Britain. In London he turned his immense energies to helping others escape from Nazi rule, supporting himself by what employment he could find. He worked at various times in a factory and in a dairy depot. It was inevitable that he should be drawn into left-wing émigré politics and equally inevitable that he should find himself involved in the debates and tensions between the various tendencies of an émigré Left dominated by the Communist Party. It was at this time that he began to feel his way as a writer, his first volume—Deutschland: Gedichte—appearing in 1944. This is how he described his political development in those war years.

At first I didn't do anything politically. I had generally left-wing sympathies. I tried to find out who was right—Stalinists or Trotskyists. I had read Stalin's *Short History of the Communist Party* and came to the conclusion that it was faking history, so I tended to the Trotskyists. There was a Trotskyist circle in West End Lane, but I found that when there were more than two or three people together they used to split up. I thought this was stupid because the Communists did very effective work among the young refugees. I thought that obviously what they said about the Trotskyists was lies, but that this was a childhood disorder of many revolutionary movements, a terrible over-simplification, so if I joined them I could work against it. And I did try to work against it.

I left the CP in 1943 when a boy whom I had recruited—my best friend—committed suicide because he had the same doubts that I had, as I discovered from a poem in his pocket when I had to identify his corpse. I later found more traces in his writings. I never got over that really. A founding member of the Austrian Communist Party was chucked out at this time. The Party was wrong without question. So I asked for an assessment of

my work and when that was very positive I said: 'Right, now I am leaving, I've had enough.' Then they announced that I must be treated in a very friendly way because I could be very useful as a poet but that I mustn't be told secrets any more because I had gone mad.

By 1944 I had distanced myself from the Communists. Naturally I was for Allied victory but I was very much disturbed by the question of collective responsibility, because I thought that was a waiving of class differences. Holding the Germans collectively responsible meant putting Socialists, Communists and Nazis into one group and I was against that. Also collective guilt tended to be treated at the time as a juridical fact and not a psychological symptom. I didn't like that either. At the very end of the war I was very disappointed by the atom-bombs. I thought they were war crimes.

By the end of the war Fried had begun to make his mark as a poet and, like many people on the Left at that time, had to find his political bearings in the post-war world. This meant in his case, as he explained, deciding whether to settle in Germany, and what attitude to take to Stalinist Communism, both politically and aesthetically.

Some poems of mine had been published in Moscow during the war by Johannes R. Becher in *International Literature*. Then one of them travelled to a camp in Kazakhstan, to anti-fascists who had fallen into disgrace, and from there it went to Vorkuta, was translated into Russian and became a camp song. So I entered immediately after the war into direct contact with Communist writers but I disagreed with some of their theories—particularly with socialist realism and with their lies and half-truths. When I was offered a job as lecturer at the University in East Berlin I wasn't over-enthusiastic and I wanted to make it a condition that they publish my new book first. They said 'No'—because it was a step backward in my literary development. It was a volume of poems with half-rhymes and word-plays. So I turned their offer down even though I was working in a factory at the time. I didn't really do much political work. I was involved in packing food and doing propaganda for sending food to Germany. Later I didn't want to do anything against my old comrades and yet I didn't want to work with them. Occasionally I published something in their paper in Austria which wasn't damaging for questions of the day.

I was very disappointed with Stalinism and didn't believe at that moment that there was any political activity I could do. I got roused when so-called Titoists were persecuted—amongst them some friends of mind, one of whom, Otto Sling, was later hanged in Czechoslovakia. Then I decided I had to attack Stalinism but more on a Titoist line. I wasn't in favour of Western capitalism although I thought, wrongly, that it was less harmful than Stalinism. This changed gradually in later years, particularly when Khrushchev made his secret speech and the CP was banned in West Germany. The West German army was recreated, for which Nazi officers were taken over with their ranks increased by one grade. I found that hateful. I started writing against such things.

In the grim conditions of the post-war years in Germany writers and poets had to

feel their way in a language which had altered radically and a society which was struggling to reshape itself under foreign occupation. The most influential and prestigious literary circle was the Gruppe 47, to which practically all recognized writers like Grass and Böll belonged. Fried had some difficulty in being accepted because of his politics, as he explained.

They wanted to show each other their writings and to review them. Their aim was to prevent a repetition of Hitler—not a very ambitious programme, not a very intelligent one, in a way. It was social-democratic, by and large. Günter Grass was a member, a convinced social-democrat, and he was very good at teaching the Germans that it's not below the dignity of a writer to work for his political convictions. On the other hand, his political conviction was that any criticism of the SPD from the Left was most dangerous and had to be fought as hard as possible. So very soon our friendship was over—I was more of the opinion of Reinhardt Lettau, later prominent in the student movement, who was also of the left wing. The group had become very prestigious: publishers came to the meetings and if your reading happened to go well, then several would surround you and want to publish your work and have it read on the radio stations. On my first evening I made a good impression and increased my chances of publication.

The philosopher Ernst Bloch, author of Das Prinzip Hoffnung, who is only now becoming better known in Britain, was a figure to whom Fried was drawn as a man of the Left who resisted the categories of Communist orthodoxy in considering questions of politics and philosophy. At this time—in the 1950s—Fried had found an unlikely position as a commentator broadcasting to East Germany for the BBC German Service. He only left it in 1968, when he found that his freedom as a commentator—the kind of freedom which can sometimes be found and exploited even in the most monolithic of organizations—was being restricted.

After the Berlin Wall was built Ernst Bloch came over and didn't go back. He also came to England where he immediately rang me up and invited me to see him. I was working for the BBC German Service at the time. I was very pleased when Bloch told me that he had studied my broadcasts together with his students—I never knew whether or not I was a collaborator, for I had to make some compromises with the BBC. But Bloch was reassuring; he said I was not a collaborator—and that was very good. The BBC was comparatively generous—for example, I could publish my book of poems *Und Vietnam und* and that would have been impossible in a West German station.

To me Bloch was somebody who had been very close to the Communists—a heretic, as Deutscher put it, but not a renegade—and I was trying very hard to be a heretic but not by any means a renegade. This was sometimes tricky. My job at the BBC at the time was to write programmes for Eastern Europe. On the one hand, this was a wonderful opportunity to tell people things I really had on my mind—like things about Havemann, the East German scientist—and later I was able to give long talks on the writings of Che Guevara, which were unobtainable in East Germany, and put them out in weekly instalments so that people in East Germany record them on tape. But there are certain limits—there are forms of censorship. One noticed more and more that bourgeois democracy was not a real

democracy. I wrote a poem at the time where I asked if 'a democracy where one cannot ask if it is a real democracy is really a democracy.' I found I could talk about nasty things that happened in the West only when I also said nasty things about the East. I sometimes found ingenious ways out of it. For example, I would include for the sake of balance things about East Germany and Russia even if I didn't think there was anything particularly bad happening. These were then passed for policy, but if the broadcast was too long—as was often the case—I had to cut it at the last minute at my own discretion.

I was most interested in Bloch's book *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (*The Legacy of this Time*), which is shorter than *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. What I learned from him was, first, that though social and political events, our social background, shape our thinking, as Marx says, they don't always shape it immediately but sometimes with a great time-lag; and secondly, that they don't always shape it in a straightforward way but often follow a crooked thinking-process. As Adorno says, 'normal consciousness is usually false consciousness'—particularly in the case of intellectuals, on whom so many different things impinge and who are torn between their fear of being declassed and the possibility of having less directly alienated jobs than many factory workers, who must produce for the enemy to live at all. I do not think Bloch is a great original philosopher. I think that he pointed out some things in the history of Socialism beautifully, that he drew on a wide field of knowledge, although psychological knowledge was not his forte. The idea of a many-layered dialectical materialism was most valuable to me, because Marx himself—as a son of the Enlightenment—had clearly over-rated the directness of human rational reaction to circumstances. He therefore thought that in a crisis people will always very quickly rally round their interests. In actual fact it is not so. In a crisis, people tend to fall into panic-thinking and they regress and seek a strong man, a father-image or something to hold on to against their fear. Anything that would help to explain these discrepancies in less clumsy ways than Stalinism did was therefore a great help.

Bloch thought it was necessary to form utopias in order to go forward at all. I would not say today that it is the only possible way in which you can make progress. But it is certainly, historically speaking, one way in which humanity has operated and in which—at a time of comparative hopelessness when one is an anti-fascist rather than a pro-communist—one can always find hope by fighting against injustice, if one doesn't really know where justice leads. Evidently there was something wrong with the organization of communism as I knew it. I tended to think that the answer lay with Rosa Luxemburg's criticisms. Bloch would not let himself be nailed down on this point. At various times in his life he tried to make a *Burgfrieden*—a temporary truce—with Stalinism. He did this, for example, in his book *Freedom and Order*, where he made play with that very dangerous Hegelian maxim: Freedom is the recognition of necessity.

Someone who had more to give Fried than Bloch was Herbert Marcuse, whose libertarian views and critique of consumerism had an immense influence on young Germans active in the political groupings that eventually came together to form the APO—the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition—and to be the motor-force behind the events of 1968 in Germany. Fried explained Marcuse's importance in these terms.

Marcuse was a great influence on German students on the Left. I first met him at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference in London in 1967. Marcuse was one of the first people I knew of who tried to demonstrate—particularly in his *Eros and Civilization*—how Marxism and psychoanalysis interlink, that psychoanalysis needs Marxism and not Marxism psychoanalysis. (Before him there had been one grand *simplificator*, Wilhelm Reich, who then went off the rails, and before that Otto Gross, who died in 1920.) He also analysed and criticized Soviet Marxism as a reflection of the reality of the Soviet Union, and showed how it deviated from the intentions of original Marxism. He also underlined the deceptive nature of bourgeois democracy. He thought that the workers had been as it were *gleichgeschaltet* (assimilated) by bourgeois society in late capitalism owing to the long boom period and he also thought—based on the American experience—that it is not so much up to the workers nowadays to uphold the banner of revolution in the metropolis but to the *Randgruppen*—the fringe groups—and the students. This observation also held good for Germany, where the working class had been utterly demoralized by Hitler, its tradition had been largely destroyed, and new trade unions had been formed on an American rather than a German model—not without the influence of the CIA. Marxism had, after all, a Eurocentric attitude to the lumpenproletariat like the blacks of the Southern states of the USA, and the same holds good for Central and Latin America. But the lumpenproletariat in these countries is infinitely better than what Marx had seen in his life-time in Europe—although, of course, he couldn't know that at the time. But I think the *Randgruppen* theory of Marcuse was a theory of despair. He wanted something to move. I remember that in 1968, when it started to look as if the French workers were with the students, Marcuse said with great enthusiasm: 'That proves that all my theories are wrong.' He would have loved to have his theories proved wrong. He was not more in love with his theories than with the revolution.

Fried had never ceased to be intensely interested in politics but had not been politically active in the conventional sense of the term until the student movement began in Germany. Although he belonged to an older generation, he won the respect and trust of the student activists, being particularly close to that remarkable figure, Rudi Dutschke. This is his account of the period which included the demonstrations in Berlin against the Shah of Iran, in which a student was shot by the police, and the great Vietnam demonstration. Fried was prominent in these events, as he was in the lively student forums at the Free University of Berlin.

The leading Social Democrat at that time was Willy Brandt, whom I liked, and whom I had met also at the Gruppe. I thought that it would be absolutely necessary for the Social Democrats to rule Germany—not the Adenauer people. What happened instead was the SPD-CDU Great Coalition, and that wasn't the best possible development for German Social Democracy. Left-wing students then founded the APO, which was centred in Berlin but existed in almost every university. I got involved gradually because friends of mine and my publisher, Klaus Wagenbach, took part in various protests against German rearmament and so on. And I signed these protests as well. Then people came from Germany to visit me in London, and some of them I liked very much. My things began to be published in left-wing anthologies. I was also in touch with other left-wing writers like Andersch, who published a periodical *Texte und Zeichen*, in

which I also published. Finally there was the German Socialist Students League, which was part of the Social Democratic student organization: the SDS.

Things were comparatively peaceful until 1967 when the Six Day War broke out. Che Guevara was shot, as was Benno Ohnesorg, a student, at the time of the visit to Berlin of the Shah of Iran on 2 June 1967. Then there were violent reactions against his death. I wrote strong poems attacking the Vietnam war and was myself denounced on the grounds that one can't write such poems any more, nowadays—pseudo-aesthetics. The death of Benno Ohnesorg and the freeing of the policeman who shot him tended to radicalize me very much. It was clear that the people who were most active in organizing the opposition were the libertarian socialists. Leading figures were Rudi Dutschke and Krahel, the favourite student of Adorno in Hamburg. The Vietnam demonstration early in 1968 was a profound experience because it showed how the police would not permit a perfectly legal demo and how the very fact that prominent people from many countries came to it forced them to give way.

The obvious question is: What went wrong? How did this impressive political movement peter out leaving a legacy of sterile terrorism? Fried was clear about the reasons for the failure of the student movement and why, although he knew and respected people like Ulrike Meinhoff as human beings, he could not condone terrorism.

Unfortunately Marcuse's theories were not proved wrong—as he would have wished. The students did not make sufficient contact with the working class. Since the revolution was not on the order of the day, Dutschke thought that one had to try by whatever means to keep possibilities open in society; capitalism could not go on, or should not be allowed to go on, for it was ecologically and morally and in every way impossible. Marx thought that the colonies would be lifted to the level of the industrialized countries. But we know now that unless a former colonial country has special capital resources, like oil, the poor countries become poorer and the rich richer, because not enough accumulation takes place. Rudi thought that in the absence of a revolutionary situation, trying to make reforms was not in itself criminal, but that it was bad when reformism became convinced of itself and tried to ward off other solutions. Meanwhile the fringe-groups theory had led some people to think that one could imitate the example of the South American Tupamaros in Europe. That was the beginning of the Baader-Meinhoff Group.

I had written against imitations of the Tupamaros in something I offered to a German publisher, but there were adherents of the *Randgruppen* there who sabotaged it—it always vanished. I eventually published it in Switzerland so that it should be there on the record. The Baader-Meinhoff Group was very much an attempt to base itself on the Tupamaros and the 'foco' theory, which didn't even work with the Tupamaros in the long run, let alone in Europe. And the Tupamaros had the passive sympathy of the population—which was not the case with the Baader-Meinhoff Group.

The Red Army Fraction wanted to have the freedom which it was denied

by the Communist Party. But it didn't allow its members more freedom, as one can even see in their far from fraternal dealings with the rival faction, the 2nd of June.

The Red Army Faction came into being after Rudi was out of the picture—the victim of an assassination attempt—and after the students' revolt had reached its maximum strength. Because the students couldn't make their own alliance with the working class or with the broad group of German intellectuals, they tended to retreat like any movement without a realistic strategy or tactics. People felt weak and therefore wanted to hold on to something stronger. One group, the DKP *Traditionalisten*, held on to Moscow again, particularly after Czechoslovakia was invaded. On the other hand, Ulrike Meinhoff, who had for years been an illegal member of the DKP, had grown more and more disillusioned and the invasion of Czechoslovakia more or less put the final nail into the coffin of her DKP allegiance. But already before that, for example at the Vietnam demonstration in 1966, she successfully countered the CP and East German line by getting Peter Weiss—whom they wanted desperately to keep away from what they regarded as an adventure—to come from East Berlin. And she had done many other things. For example, she analysed the Bartsch child-murders, tracing them back to his education and the complexes it had produced. This showed a great advance on DKP thinking, which still claimed that Hitler Fascism had been essentially the dictatorship of the most reactionary groups of capital. After all, there had also been the Fascist mass movement and the reification and alienation of the Nazi party itself; otherwise the war would have ended two years earlier when German heavy industry saw there was nothing more in it for them. Nevertheless, Ulrike Meinhoff didn't have the knowledge that Rudi had, and as long as he was there she constantly sought his advice in all her political developments. That is why he said, when he was in England, that had he known she was going to go in for all this armed struggle he could have brought her out of that madness in an afternoon. He was not very grandiloquent and wouldn't have said such a thing lightly. Anyway the very undignified scramble for father figures—whether Mao or the Soviet Union—didn't attract the entire Left. Ulrike wanted something else. One must see too that at the time Germany was supplying America with chemicals for the Vietnam War—what they call today the Seveso poison. (Agent Orange was not radically different from the so-called defoliants, which also crippled lots of children, and did untold damage to the country.) Germany was also providing sophisticated electronic war-material. And to sabotage such transports would have been a sound idea, in fact. One had to form a special illegal gang for such a thing, which would know how to pinch cars, break into premises and blow up something if necessary. But to call that 'armed struggle', to believe according to the *foco* theory that if one fights against it more and more people will see the barbarity of the government and therefore support the revolution was a ridiculous miscalculation. And that was their downfall. Primitive activism in a moment of despair is very attractive—and one can't say that the Baader-Meinhoff Group didn't do anything useful. Thus they destroyed a computer in Heidelberg which—according to US Army sources—caused three flights by B-52 bombers against the Vietnamese not to take place.

What then, I asked Fried, was the positive legacy of the sixties in Germany and of

the involvement in political action and debate of a generation of students who today must be middle-aged members of German society?

Unfortunately the student movement did not successfully reach out to the mass of the German working class. Detractors said it was a complete failure. But a hell of a lot of teachers all over Germany—in what used to be a nationalist, right-wing profession—are products of '68, of the '68 generation. The universities, too, used to be a reserve of the Right throughout the Weimar period but began moving to the Left in the Adenauer period and to some extent remain there today. Educational principles, demands for permissiveness and so on have emerged which would not have done so without the students. Even the reactionary forces have found that they have had to give up some of their sexually repressive attitudes, which were one of the bases for the production of an authoritarian morality. These are profound after-effects of the student movement, and Germany would look entirely different today if it had never existed.

Today the student movement is powerless as far as revolutionizing German society goes. However, our aim must still be to overthrow capitalism or to overcome it at the very least, because as long as there is production for the maximization of profit all the splendid achievements are only temporary—like the democratization of German Universities, which has been taken back step by step in recent years. Now, the possibility of taking over power at some future date has been increased by the reproduction in Germany of a militant left-wing tradition. After the war the Frankfurt School created a left-wing tradition for the first time and made Marxism respectable, stupid as this sounds, for, of course, 'respectable Marxism' usually isn't Marxism—nor was it. Adorno's Marxism was a very uncombative Marxism. The student movement were the first people who not only wanted—like the CP—a future Communism but who also said: 'In order to fight alienation, we must in our life-conditions prefigure the conditions of life in the future and prepare, if you like, islands—not idyllic islands, but what we might call *Rückzugsbauten*, areas to fall back on, areas of life where the circumstances are not those of capitalist competition.' The *Wohngemeinschaften*, or communes, made many ultra-left mistakes, such as the idea that their first step should be to take the door out of the lavatory so that people shouldn't experience shame, which is idiotic. But a new life-form was created on the whole: doors aren't taken out of lavatories any more, but you find the new attitudes in the housing cooperatives and cooperative enterprises and workshops for the unemployed, which are self-initiative ventures of varying success. All this wouldn't have happened without the left-wing tradition, and that tradition didn't exist before the Frankfurt School.

What did he think then of more recent political developments in West Germany—of the rise of the Green movement and the part played in it by a figure like the East German refugee, Rudolf Bahro? What sympathy did he have for Bahro's political analysis and how far did it chime with his own?

I had become increasingly vexed with the substitutionist ideology of the Communists. Rosa Luxemburg had already forecast the terrible consequences of democratic centralism. So I did not know what to make of things. One attempt was Bahro's *Dis Alternative*, which tried to criticize

so-called 'actually existing socialism' by classically Marxist methods. He came to the opinion that it didn't deserve to be called 'socialism' but was a transitional society, which contained the grains, the elements, for a transition to real socialism. To me it seemed that his analysis was qualitatively convincing and quantitatively wrong in that it overrated these qualities.

Soon after he came to West Germany Bahro became a member of the Greens, which Dutschke also joined at the end of his life. The necessity of this ecological movement had already been forecast by Marcuse. Taking to task that very crude 19th-century Marxist, Dietzgen, who said that once we have socialist means of production then we have the whole of nature as our field for exploitation, Marcuse said that that would mean exploiting nature to the point that it would be ruined. To him socialism, the use of the means of production for social necessity, was the precondition for a new harmony with nature—because obviously production for the maximization of profit is not a basis for that. I found this very convincing. I also formed the opinion that the anarchists (particularly Bakunin, who was a much more primitive thinker than Marx) had one positive thing which only Rosa Luxemburg had after them—an unbroken attitude to the necessity of freedom. The others, by saying that we couldn't afford it, that we had to be like a disciplined fighting army, took it upon themselves to undergo the same procedures as those of a trained army. And once you sacrifice the tradition of freedom, even for the best of purposes, it takes a hell of a long time till you get it back. Without the student movement there would have been no Green movement in Germany, or else it would be a *Blut und Boden*, 'blood and soil' movement—a right-wing fantasy. Originally there were struggles within the Green movement between a Right and a Left. The Left won. The struggles today are between the absolutists, the 'fundamentalists', and the 'realists'. To a certain extent they need each other. The Fundis need to keep the Realos from becoming a completely opportunist ginger-group of the Social Democrats, while the Fundis by themselves would be a nonsense and end up as preachers devoid of politics. I think the Greens are tremendously important, because if there is a situation in Germany—and I hope there will be—when the Social Democrats get stronger, then it will be absolutely necessary to have the Greens to make the Social Democrats do things, not stew in their own juice. That means encouraging all those people in the SPD who really want to do something about ecology, who really want to do something about getting rid of nuclear weapons. And it means encouraging all those within the SPD who are trying to fight against bureaucracy.

Both Marcuse and Rudi Dutschke had the idea of a synthesis between Marxism and anarchism. German Social Democracy has gone far too far away from Marxism—much further even than the Austrian Social Democrats. But there are rather more Marxist elements among the Greens than even among the left-wing Social Democrats. I think that, in a very rough and ready preliminary form, certain tenets of Marxism and anarchism could be united in a Red-Green coalition. That is why the German bourgeoisie is absolutely scared stiff of a Red-Green coalition. They'd much rather have a Social Democratic government. And when the bourgeoisie is really scared about something that's always a useful sign, because by and large they are much more informed and much more consequential class-fighters than the vast majority, unfortunately, of the working class.

Fried was remarkable for the fact that although he settled in London and had British citizenship, he made important interventions in German politics through his poetry—which was banned from schools in Bavaria and should, according to one Christian Democrat politician, be banned—as well as by engaging in public debate on German television and radio and in other forums. How successful did he think he had been?

I have not intervened in Germany in a very focused way, but I have always tried to point the way to a socialist revolution—a possibility ruined by the situation, by the weakness of the German revolutionary forces, and the aberrations of such forces as used to be revolutionary. I could mainly fight against each injustice as it came up, whether it was the *Berufsverbot* in Germany, or the Vietnam war, or the Zionist behaviour against the Palestinians, or the Contras in Nicaragua, or the attack on the student movement or the murder of the Baader-Meinhoff people—with whom I did not agree—in jail. My interventions were sometimes very successful, but on the whole they were what Brecht called a series of 'glorified retreats' and that's not good enough. Now for the first time I see the chance for a direct advance, above all in Eastern Europe, an attempt to make a genuine article out of the distorted article—Socialism. If that can be achieved, if Gorbachev can be helped to achieve it—and there is no doubt he can be helped from the West and not just by spineless fellow-travelling, as in Stalin's day—then I want to do that.

MEMORIAL MEETING FOR ERICH FRIED

Saturday, 4 March, 7.00 p.m.

Unitarian Chapel
Upper Street
London N.1.

Farewell to the Classic Labour Movement?

A hundred and twenty-five years after Lassalle, and a hundred years after the founding of the Second International, the socialist and labour parties are at a loss as to where they are going. Wherever socialists meet they ask one another gloomily about the future of our movements. I think it is perfectly justified to ask such questions, but—and this should be emphasized—they are not confined to the socialist parties. All the other parties are in the same position.

Who really knows what the future will bring? Who even thinks they know, apart from the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other irrationalist fanatics whose numbers are again on the increase precisely because blind faith alone appears to be reliable in a world in which all have lost their way. Do they know their future in the United States, where they are haunted by the ghost of economic and political decline? Do they know in Rome, where, despite every effort, the Catholic Church is falling apart? Do they know in Jerusalem, where the dream of the national liberation of Judaism is collapsing under the batons of Israeli soldiers? That they do not know in Moscow, and do not even profess to know, is obvious. But what is happening in the Gorbachev era, developments which had been declared a priori impossible by generations of cold warriors on the basis of theories of totalitarianism, proves that even the intellectuals and ideologues of the cold war have come to the end of their cul-de-sac. And the economists—the theologians of our time, disguised as technical experts—do they know? Evidently they do not. How little talk there is about monetarism these days, considering that even at the beginning of the eighties it still dominated the thinking of Conservative governments. When was the last time even Mrs Thatcher mentioned the names Friedman or Hayek, although it was just ten years ago that they were parading their new Nobel prizes? Do businessmen know? Who really believes that? Certainly we in the socialist movement are only scratching our heads as we face the future, for we appear to be entering a land for which our guidebooks ill equip us. But the others no longer have relevant guidebooks either.

That, of course, is not surprising, even without taking into account the fact that movements born in the last century bring a great deal with them from their period of origin which can only be transposed very indirectly

from the era of Krupp's howitzer to the modern age of laser technology. However, the main point is this: in the thirty years following the Second World War the world was transformed globally, fundamentally, radically, and with such unprecedented speed that all previous analyses, even when they remained quite correct in principle, simply had to be modified and brought up to date in practice. There is no need to demonstrate this in detail. To put it in a single sentence, one might say that, taking the world as a whole, the Middle Ages ended between 1950 and 1970. And I would go further and assert that as far as Europe is concerned, those twenty years saw the end of the modern era too. Let us only consider what happened to the peasantry in those two decades, not only in central and western Europe but also in large parts of the Third World. This unique acceleration of historical development alone would have demanded a fundamental revision of previous interpretations. In my opinion this will present the main problem for historians of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

'Thirty Golden Years'

However, for a generation after 1950, it was possible, or at least tempting, to try to conceive this macro-historical revolution in a linear fashion, or to over-simplify it by, for example, describing it as 'economic-technological growth' or something along those lines. But this epoch of global boom—not only in capitalist economies, but also, in a very different setting, in socialist economies—these 'thirty golden years', as a French commentator has described them, led to a world-wide, long-term economic crisis, which has already lasted at least fifteen years. I do not think we can expect a new long-term era of 'economic Sturm und Drang', as Parvus once called it, before the 1990s. I know of no more optimistic forecast that we could really take seriously.

But it is in this time of crisis (which strangely enough began exactly a hundred years after the onset of the analogous 'great depression' of the Bismarck era) that the internal and external contradictions of the post-war period have moved to the front of the world stage. What has become clear is how frail or untenable old analyses or political remedies are, and how hard it is to replace them with new ones. For example, the de-industrialization of the old industrial economies has clearly emerged for the first time as a possible future for our countries. I mean ~~not~~ a shift away from the old industries to technically superior ones, or the transfer of industry from the Ruhr to the Neckar, but the movement of industry away from the West altogether. For the so-called 'new industrial nations' of the Third World are a phenomenon of the current era of crisis. May I merely remind you that at the beginning of the seventies South Korea was still classed as a 'developing country', and her industry was described as follows: 'foodstuffs, textiles, plywood, rubber and steel works under construction'. The real crisis of the left today is not that we do not understand the new world situation as well as the others, but that we do not seem to have much to say on the matter. Capitalism does not need to say much, as long as a sudden collapse of the type which occurred in 1931 is avoided—and, after all, that much has been learned from the thirties. Capitalism can retreat to the logic of the market, for as a millionaire in New York explained to me a few days after the stock exchange crash: 'Sooner or later

the market finds an appropriate level again, so long as we avoid revolution in the meantime.' We, however, are expected to say much more.

The crisis of the old ideas, and the need for new thinking, were imposed on socialists by reality itself and its effect on political praxis. The world has changed and we must change with it. I would almost go so far as to say: we more than anyone else. For as parties and as movements we are very much trapped in history. We became mass movements, very suddenly, a hundred years ago. In 1880 there was no socialist or other workers' party with mass support, with the partial exception of Germany. Twenty-five years later Sombart considered the worldwide rise of such mass parties so natural that he tried to explain why the United States, which had no socialism, was an exception.

I should like to make five points about those new movements, which have by now grown to be very old movements. First, they were formed on the basis of a proletarian class consciousness among manual and wage workers, in spite of the striking heterogeneity—the inner and outer fragmentation—of the workers. One cannot even say that those workers who joined the new parties formed a particularly homogeneous group. Nevertheless, it is clear that for workers at that time, what they had in common far outweighed any differences, with the exception sometimes, but not always, of religious or national differences. Without this consciousness, mass parties whose only programme in practice was their name could never have emerged. Their appeal—'You are workers. You are a class. As such you must join the workers' party'—could not have been heard. What we find today is not that there is no longer any working class, but that class consciousness no longer has this power to unite.

Second, despite the fact that both their theory and practice were tailored specifically to the proletariat, these parties were not purely workers' parties. This is probably not so apparent in the highly proletarian SPD but it can be seen clearly in Scandinavia. Given the level of development of the Finnish economy at the time, only an insignificant proportion of the 47 per cent of Finns who voted for Social Democracy in the free elections of 1916 could have been proletarian. Like other Social Democratic parties, the Finnish party was a people's party built around a proletarian core. Of course, no one disputes that, normally speaking, Social Democratic parties hardly expected to win over more than a minority of voters from other social classes.

Third, the mass organization of the class-conscious proletariat appeared to be bound, organically or logically, to the specific ideology of socialism, and typically a Marxian brand of socialism. Parties organized along class lines but without socialist ideas could be seen either as transitional forms on the road to the socialist labour party or as unimportant peripheral phenomena.

Fourth, the sudden rise of the socialist mass parties reinforced the preconceived view of Marxists that only the industrial proletariat, organized and conscious of itself as a class, could act as the bearer of the future state. For, unlike in Marx's own lifetime, the proletariat appeared everywhere to be on the way to forming the majority of the population. The labour-

intensive growth of the economy typical of the time reinforced the confidence in democracy, whose standard-bearers the socialists became everywhere. The question who was to bring about socialism seemed to answer itself.

Fifth, these movements originally formed purely oppositional forces which only moved into the area of potential or actual government after the First World War—as founders of revolutionary new systems in the case of the Communists, or, in the case of the Social Democrats, as state-sustaining pillars of a reformist capitalism. For the socialist labour movements both alternatives signified a fundamental change from their previous role.

The Breaking of the Cord

It is now clear that all these characteristics were historically determined, especially their convergence in the international phenomenon of the socialist labour movement. I would go even further. All socialist and Communist parties of significance, without exception, emerged before the Second World War and, apart from a very few exceptions—China, Vietnam, or West Bengal, for example—had done so even before the First World War. Since the Second World War, in the dozens of new states in an economically transformed world, no movements comparable to the socialist mass parties have emerged. Even where new proletarian mass movements have appeared and are structurally comparable to those of the early twentieth century, in practice, politically and ideologically, they turn out to be quite different, as in Brazil and Poland. The umbilical cord once connecting the labour movement and social revolution with the ideology of socialism has been cut. The greatest social revolution in the current world crisis is the Iranian revolution. It is easier to explain why the European labour parties originally emerged before 1917—and also, incidentally, their spread to the Third World, which, thanks to the October revolution and the Communist movement, took place principally between the two world wars—than it is to explain the non-emergence of such parties and hegemonies since. One can even observe a decline in some existing parties, which at one time were far from unimportant, for instance in the Middle East. I mention this set of problems here only because as a historian I have long been puzzled by such questions as why a mass labour movement in Argentina, for example, first became possible not on a socialist but on a Peronist basis. This case simply underlines the fact that our movements, the classic socialist or Communist labour parties, were born in a specific epoch which has now passed.

This patently does not mean that these movements have now ceased to be viable within their original heartlands. Quite the reverse. Such parties are still what they were in the past, workers' parties, but not exclusively so. In the non-socialist part of Europe they form either the governing or the chief opposition parties in *all* states except—if I am not mistaken—for Ireland and Turkey. In socialist Europe they are the parties which constitute the system, but this is not comparable. In the course of the past century the socialist labour parties have shown a significant capability for revival and adaptation, though probably more in their Social Democratic than in their Communist form. Again and again they have risen from the

ashes of their ruined or destroyed predecessors to become politically important centres of power, like the SPD in Germany after fascism or, in the last decade or so, the PSOE in Spain or the French Socialist Party under Mitterrand. The question 'farewell to the classic labour movement?' does not mean 'is there a future for the SPD or the Labour Party?', but rather 'what kind of future do they have?' However, we must not forget that we can no longer simply *rely* on historical continuity. Other movements are not obliged to meet the same fate as the PCF, which recently seemed to be disappearing as an effective mass party: even the gods are powerless in the face of political stupidity. But this case does prove how conditional the loyalty of members is these days.

Of the five original characteristics of the movement outlined above, only two still apply fully: the classical party is still a party of the people, and it is still a potential governing party. The old assumption that the transition to socialism would ensue from the development of the industrial proletariat is no longer tenable. The connection between party, socialist ideology and a vision of the future still seems to be alive, thank goodness, despite the fact that from the 1950s onwards all party leaders, even those of some western Communist parties, have waved socialism goodbye, and, if they continue to speak of it at all, have tried to make it appear that socialism simply means having a bit more sympathy than the others. Nevertheless, if there is still a place in Western politics for socialists today, then it is within the old mass parties, despite the agreement among leftwing sects that these parties now do nothing more than shore up the system. Moreover, in contrast to the United States, where almost all American socialists have no choice but to work within the Democratic Party, in Europe the classic parties remain true, at least theoretically, to the idea of a better and transformed society. This, however, reflects the fortunate strength of our historical tradition rather than the necessary connection between the existing parties of this tradition, the working class and socialism.

Class Consciousness

It is class consciousness, the condition on which our parties were originally built, that is facing the most serious crisis. The problem is not so much objective de-proletarianization which has been brought about by the decline of old-style industrial labour, but is rather the subjective decline of class solidarity. This segmentation of the working class has received a good deal of attention recently, but I would like to mention only the case of the British Labour Party, where the traditional proletarian vote has fallen far more sharply than the size of the proletariat. In 1987 almost two-thirds of skilled workers, 60 per cent of trade union members, and more than half the unskilled and semi-skilled workers voted for other parties, and the Labour Party mustered the support of barely more than half of the unemployed. Conversely, almost 50 per cent of Conservative voters were workers. A similar shift can be detected in the support for the PCF. Yet once both parties could rely upon the blind class loyalty of their proletariat.

There is no point in simply mourning this lost class consciousness (although as an old Marxist I still do) nor in retreating into the few remaining nature reserves where the good old proletariat can still be

observed. The great and heroic British miners' strike evoked a great deal of honest romanticism, but there is a difference between 200,000 pit-workers and a country of 55 million. What is more, half of the pitworkers have disappeared since 1985 anyway. And as for the argument of the romantic left—the strike proved the exact opposite assumptions to be true: even among miners one must expect mass strike-breaking today. It is comforting, of course, that class consciousness is also crumbling in other classes. In 1987, for example, 40 per cent of the upper classes in Britain voted against Mrs Thatcher, and among the university-educated classes this figure was as high as two-thirds. But the possibility of new political combinations does not compensate for the fact that workers are crumbling into groups with diverging and contradictory interests.

And yet, in the face of all this, the fact remains that the parties which emerged historically as the defenders and representatives of workers and the poor cannot lose this function as long as such defence is necessary. And this is the case, for today there is no longer any 'common recognition of social principles'—at least not in Great Britain. Fortunately, too, our parties are not *purely* workers' parties and never were; they have lost neither the capability of forming broad people's parties or coalitions of classes and social groups, nor the potential to become ruling parties of government. Today it is not class consciousness which holds our parties together, but the national existence of these parties which unites groups and classes which would otherwise probably crumble.

And this is no small thing. Our movement, the whole of democracy, is once again under threat. We have become so used to the redemocratization—or rather the liberalization—of the bourgeois system since 1945, and the fact that such words as fascism and neo-fascism have been fully emptied of their content, that it is now difficult to remember that in periods of crisis, capitalism could again resort to the solution of the political right. In my country the radical right is in power and, thanks to our mistakes, has been given the opportunity to eliminate the labour movement, the Labour Party, and the entire left as a serious factor in politics. This is the quite blatant aim of the regime. It could happen again in your country too. And the only resistance we can raise against this danger is a coalition of all democrats around those mass parties of the left which still exist in Europe. That much, thank goodness, still remains of the classic labour movement.

Translated by Hilary Pilkington

The Panorama of Feminism in Brazil

The women's movement in Brazil—of which feminism is one aspect—has reflected the condition of women themselves, whose unity as a gender is cut across by other fundamental references (ethnicity, social class, etc.) and has above all been cross-class in character.* Its heterogeneous composition stems directly from specific features of Brazilian society, its strong internal pluralism and the broader political context in which it developed.¹ On the one hand, the marked inequality in the distribution of wealth and resources has created a modern, economically privileged sector open to innovation whose demand for material and cultural consumption is similar to that in any large city in the industrialized countries. On the other hand, the majority of the population, living in the urban periphery and rural areas, is excluded from the benefits of highly concentrated economic growth. To these very different realities correspond very different demands. In the urban periphery these concern the provision of basic needs: water, electricity, sewage, paved roads, health and education. The needy inhabitants of the major cities, although excluded from its comforts, are exposed to its modernity. They can

make use of the networks of public services it offers. They are able, as residents, to demand access to its benefits. Changes in patterns of behaviour propelled by the most modern and privileged sectors thus have their impact upon the different urban groups, rich and poor, peripheral and central, and are adapted to the specific situations of each. Feminism began to find fertile ground among the urban middle sectors as a radical proposal to politicize the private, to rethink or reinvent the most fundamental relationships in the family, in daily life, in habits which had become 'natural'. But it developed in accordance with local circumstances, becoming a movement with its own characteristics and seeking to take account of the varied situation of women in Brazil.

Different material conditions, particularly with regard to paid work and household life, provide foundations for very different political perspectives. For women from the popular classes the roles of mother and housewife have a much greater weight than paid work in their definition of themselves and the constitution of their social identity. Their daily life is demarcated by domestic activities, strongly linked to neighbourhood relationships. For women of the middle sectors—who, though discriminated against, have a higher level of education and some degree of professional training—the choice of occupational activity is more likely to be a source of gratification. Moreover, the presence of domestic servants in most middle and upper class homes decisively influences the options of this part of the female population, as well as reducing the conflicts between men and women which might arise from an overload of domestic labour.² Wage labour, then, clearly has diverse meanings for someone who has 'chosen' her profession and lives it as the realization of an individual project, and for someone who simply works out her fate, under pressure from the limited options of a disadvantaged social condition. The different representations reflect structural class differences.

The 'modernization' of the Brazilian woman from the 1960s onwards—her attachment to modern individualistic values, including the use of contraception and recourse to psychoanalysis, access to higher education, and incorporation into the labour market³—took place in a strongly

* The first version of this text was written for UNIFEM (the United Nations Women's Fund), as part of a consultancy on women in Brazil.

¹ This analysis of the women's movement considers only its contemporary manifestations, from the 1970s onwards. This does not mean that it is the only period in which women have mobilized in Brazil. Feminist demonstrations have been recorded in connection with the campaign for the abolition of slavery in the last century. Early in the twentieth century the campaign for the vote brought women into the public arena, although the suffrage movement never achieved the mass character observable in Britain and the United States. (See B.M. Alves, J. Pitanguy, *O que é feminismo*, São Paulo 1985.) After it had been won in a number of states, female suffrage was confirmed in the Electoral Code introduced by Getúlio Vargas in 1932. As in other countries where suffrage movements developed, there was then a lull in the women's movement. Nor was the political conjuncture conducive to its further development, as the dictatorial New State banned all popular demonstrations in 1937.

² See C. Bruschini, *Mulher e trabalho*, São Paulo 1985; and A. Candido, 'The Brazilian Family', in L. Smith, A. Marchant, eds., *Brazil: Portrait of Half a Continent*, New York 1951.

³ The 1980 Census recorded a little over 6 million women as economically active in 1970 (equivalent to 20.7 per cent of the economically active population), and 12 million (27.4 per cent) in 1980.

hierarchical society in terms of class, race and gender, and reproduced these sources of differentiation. Female independence bears the mark of class and of race. The resources and opportunities offered to women brought benefits primarily to the most developed regions of the country, the south-east, 'whiter' and more urban. The existence of the domestic servant is an integral part of this hierarchical context. It is worth stressing that domestic servants tend to be black. It is a legacy of slavery that there is a direct association between being black, and working in low-status areas of employment.

The maids who have eased the process of 'liberation' lived by other women, their employers, have not remained immune to the process. Domestic service is still the leading form of employment for Brazilian women.⁴ But times have changed. Neither maids nor employers are the same, at least in the major urban centres (this qualification is always necessary in so heterogeneous a country). The woman who employs the maid works outside the home and does not run the household with the same efficiency as her grandmother, but in accordance with new patterns of domestic organization. Nor does the maid behave as she once did; she acts more as a professional. She defines herself more as a worker than as an additional member of the traditional Brazilian family.⁵ She demands her rights as a worker, which under Brazilian law are not the same as those of other workers. Inequality, today, is reproduced in new ways.

A Distinctive Trajectory

Beginning among the middle sectors, feminism spread through a particular form of reciprocal articulation with popular sectors. The feminists who organized themselves in the country, linked for the most part to organizations and parties of the Left, acted politically across the whole range of mobilizations in which women were involved, giving their own activity a distinctive note of its own. They influenced and were influenced by the demands of the popular classes, which were also related to changes in the sexual behaviour and patterns of fertility and reproduction.

The link between feminism and the popular sectors gave rise to a delicate relationship with the Catholic Church,⁶ an important source of opposition in the political vacuum created by the military regime. The Catholic Church remains dominant throughout the country, despite the steadily

⁴ The 1970 Census showed that domestic service accounted for 31.3 per cent of the total of economically active women. Ten years on, however, this was the category of female employment which had suffered the most significant relative decline, down to 20 per cent of the economically active female population (Bruschini, op. cit.)

⁵ G. Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala*, Rio de Janeiro/Brasília 1980; Candido, op. cit.

⁶ The theme of women and religion is analysed in M.L.Q. Moraes, 'Família e feminismo: reflexões sobre papéis femininos na imprensa para mulheres', doctoral thesis, mimeo, University of São Paulo 1982. S.E. Alvarez ('The Politics of Gender in Latin America: Comparative Perspectives on Women in the Brazilian Transition to Democracy', PhD dissertation, Yale 1986) also emphasizes the intricate relationship between feminism and the Catholic Church. Within the Church, there is the discordant voice of the nun, Maria José Fonteneles Rosado Nunes (Sister Zeca), whose work has been systematically orientated towards the analysis and questioning of the role of women in the Church. See, for example, M.J.F.R. Nunes, *Vida religiosa nas massas populares*, Petrópolis 1985.

increasing expansion of the non-Catholic sects, particularly pentecostal, but also those of African origin such as *candomblé*, and the tendency to syncretism in the sects. Yet the Church is far from being monolithic. Its conservative wing co-exists with a progressive wing, influenced by Liberation Theology. Under the inspiration of this theology a substantial amount of community work was carried out among the poor from the 1970s on, through the Base Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs), which became a focal point of resistance to the authoritarian regime ruling the country.

The women's organizations in the poor neighbourhoods emerged and grew in strength as part of this tradition of pastoral work. This locked feminism and the Church in constant struggle for hegemony over popular groups. The predominant tone, however, was one of a politics of alliance between feminism, the Left and the Church, all three swimming against the current of the authoritarian regime. Conflictual issues such as abortion, sexuality or family planning continued to be discussed privately in small groups, but were not brought into public debate. The activity of the Church, from a feminist perspective, always had clear limits. The links common to its various factions—in particular obedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, with the Pope as its highest authority—led to a politics of advance and retreat, in which a rigidity of principles, not always visible in daily practice, ultimately prevailed in the 'burrowing away' of its most progressive representatives. This explains the unanimity on issues relating to sexual morality, with the outright condemnation of abortion, divorce and family planning.

Analyses made by the women's base organizations reveal the possibilities and limits of the strong influence of the Catholic Church in the daily lives of women, who make up the major clientele of the religious communities of the country. Chiriac and Padilha have demonstrated that the interests of the Church as an institution are placed above those of women, making difficult discussions which go against its conception of relations between the sexes. Alvarez has shown how the hegemony of the Church in popular organizations circumscribes the content and the political direction of the 'consciousness raising' of women from the popular sectors.⁷ And Moraes makes these limits explicit when she comments that the Mothers' Clubs reflect both the evangelical conceptions of Liberation Theology and the precepts of orthodox Catholicism with respect to the family, promoting the participation of women in the life of the community but at the same time reinforcing their continued adherence to traditional family roles.⁸

Another relevant difference between Brazilian and at least European feminism lies in the character of social movements.⁹ The social movements which have arisen in Europe since the late 1960s have a strong cultural connotation, questioning the values of industrial society and seeking to show that not all is well when basic needs are guaranteed. In their actions they oppose themselves to the state, questioning the notion of social

⁷ Alvarez, *op. cit.*

⁸ M.L.Q. Moraes, *Mulheres em movimento*, São Paulo 1985.

⁹ See A.O. Costa, C. Barraso, C. Sarru, 'Pesquisa sobre mulher: do limbo ao gueto?', *Cadernos de Pesquisa* 54, 1985.

welfare. In Brazil urban social movements are organized on a local basis and are rooted in the daily experience of their protagonists, the inhabitants of the urban periphery. Demanding a better distribution of urban infrastructural provision and collective consumption goods, they direct their activity at the state, as an agent which should promote social welfare. Paving, electricity, water and sewage are watchwords without meaning in societies with an assured minimum of social well-being. Here they are the fundamental object of women's demands. This form of women's participation in neighbourhood movements has as its reference point the world of reproduction, including the family and its conditions of life.

Feminism made its presence felt within this general framework, seeking to live with diversity without denying its own particularity. This required a great deal of caution. Initially, feminism had a negative connotation. One was caught in cross-fire. For the Right it was a dangerous, immoral movement, while for the Left it was bourgeois reformism. For many women and men, moreover, independently of their ideology, it had a definite anti-feminine connotation. Feminism was associated with an opposition between man and woman, whose manifestations in Brazil never took on a radical form. The image of 'feminism against femininity' even had strong repercussions internally in the women's movement, dividing its groups with exclusive self-denominations. To call oneself a feminist implies the conviction that problems specific to women will not be resolved as social structures change, but will need special treatment. Brazilian feminism developed by fusing together groups from the middle sectors and the popular movements, not least because of their close links with democratic struggles in opposition to the military regime.

In the context of authoritarianism which marked the beginning of the movement, the 'general' problems of society were given priority over the 'specific' problems facing women. Feminist issues gained their own space as the process of political 'opening' was consolidated and a large number of groups declared themselves openly feminist. Conflicts and disagreements with the Catholic Church and with some sectors of the Left, conservative as regards sexual morals, began to surface more clearly. Within this multiplicity of forms and orientations, Brazilian feminism became distinctive as some of its sectors attempted to influence public policy not only as pressure groups, but also through the use of institutional channels created within the state itself.

The First Steps

International Women's Year, 1975, as decreed by the United Nations, was the starting point for the present mobilization of women in the country. After 1968—when Institutional Act No. 5 abolished indefinitely the constitutional limits to government action, closed Congress and granted exceptional powers to the executive authority—Brazilian society had lived through a most dramatic period of kidnappings, exile, disappearances and torture, in which the delegates from the Censor's Office and the agents of the secret services haunted us daily, and every citizen was, in principle, suspected of some crime against national security. The opposition struggle had withered away, with the space for resistance confined only to clandestine action. From 1974, with the presidential succession,

there began a period of change, albeit partial and limited, known as General Geisel's project of 'slow and gradual reduction of tension'. The consequences of the 'economic miracle' became acute as inflation and the concentration of income dulled the euphoria of the earlier years. Popular discontent was made manifest by the only means available, the Congressional elections of 1974. The desire for change was revealed in the emphatic victory of the opposition MDB over the government party (ARENA), in the two-party system which had been imposed in 1965 and would last until the reorganization of the parties in 1980.

In this period, when the feminist movement was developing at a broad international level, we took our first steps in Brazil despite the continuing climate of censorship and political repression. The issue aroused curiosity and interest, mainly expressed in interviews and articles in the so-called 'alternative' press. Discussion groups began to form. However, feminism was generally seen at the time as something alien to our reality, a petty-bourgeois preoccupation.

International Women's Year, 1975, was particularly important because it served as a pretext for women to discuss and organize, in a context in which the channels of political participation were closed. Activities during the year opened the way for the first collective women's groups, linked in most cases to the still-clandestine parties and organizations of the Left. They gave birth to the Centre for the Development of Brazilian Women in São Paulo and the Brazilian Women's Centre in Rio de Janeiro, which brought together mainly professional women. The women's movement began to become visible. The founding of the Women's Amnesty Movement, also in 1975, made a significant contribution to its expansion. Arising in the state of Paraná and then moving to São Paulo, its journal, *Brasil Mulher* (from 1975 to 1980), raised the banner of struggle for amnesty and democracy, and later turned to issues associated with feminism. In 1976 (until 1978) another journal appeared, *Nas Mulheres*, which defined itself as feminist from the start. From 1975 we began to celebrate the 8th of May, Women's Day, and commemorative events had a significant impact, particularly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in bringing women's issues to the fore and drawing all the women's groups together, although there were always cleavages which permeated the movement.

As we have seen, the feminist groups acted alongside women's neighbourhood associations which had been in existence since the 1960s: Mothers' Clubs or Housewives' Associations, organized in the poor districts and linked in most cases to the Church through the base communities. They were social groups whose participants carried out typically feminine activities, working with their hands (at knitting, crochet, etc.) or engaging in religious activities (such as catechism). But from the middle of the 1970s these groups took on a more demand-oriented character, focusing on the conditions in which they lived in accordance with the pastoral option of defending the poor and oppressed. One of these Mothers' Clubs, in the southern zone of the city of São Paulo, was the birthplace in 1973 of the Cost of Living Movement—a protest against high prices which was to have considerable national impact.

The feminist groups also had links with occupational associations (of maids, for example), or with unionized women. By 1978, although women

still only accounted for 20.5 per cent of unionized workers (against 36.1 per cent of the economically active population), the number who belonged to unions had increased by 176 per cent since 1970, while the urban female labour force had grown by 123 per cent, according to figures given by Gitahy et al.²⁰ These authors argue that these trends help to explain the initiatives directed at women by union leaders from 1978 on. In recent years, women have been playing a growing role even in union leadership.²¹ In addition, Brazilian trade unionism is developing a concern for the situation of working women, above all in the wake of the organization of meetings and congresses of women in specific occupational categories.²²

Feminism Makes Its Entrance

Although the groups calling themselves feminist—by which they meant concerned specifically with women's issues—had a leading presence in the unified celebrations of 8 March, the feminist accent was hardly heard. This trend was further strengthened by a definition of the woman worker as the main subject for feminism. Discussion revolved around unequal wages, the 'double shift', and the level of labour market discrimination in general. Partly this was a question of strategy: women's work was a theme permitted and accepted by all women, and unity was a major consideration in joint events. But the emphasis also came from a dominant tendency in the movement which believed that since women workers were the object of a double oppression, of class and of gender, they would be the principal agent of feminist transformation. This is explained by the fact that the Brazilian feminist movement had traced out its path with reference to the Marxist ideology of the Brazilian Left, and to the idea, also present in liberal feminism, that paid work was a fundamental instrument of liberation of the housewife.

At this time the political situation favoured the alliance of democratic women against the ruling authoritarian regime. One of the major unifying issues, which gave rise to an intensive collective mobilization (though in fact it did no more than group together separate initiatives), was the movement for creches. It was a demand which arose out of various motives and from a variety of groups: women workers, women on the urban periphery, and feminists (who came primarily from the educated middle classes). The demand for creches sought to create conditions in which women could participate in the labour market—particularly women who lacked the resources to pay for replacements to carry out their domestic and maternal duties.

²⁰ I. Gitahy, H. Hirata, E. Lobo, R. Moyses, 'Operárias: sindicalização e reivindicações (1970-80)', *Revista Cultura e Política*, Rio de Janeiro 1982.

²¹ M.V.J. Pena, 'A participação das mulheres na luta dos trabalhadores e no movimento sindical', in Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher, *Mulher Trabalhadora*, Brasília 1986.

²² Worthy of note, among others, are the Women Metalworkers Congresses held in São Paulo and São Bernardo in 1979, as a result of the strikes of 1978 which began in the ABC industrial region on the outskirts of São Paulo City. The Second Congress of Women Metalworkers took place in São Paulo in 1983, and in 1986 CONCLAT (the National Coordinator of the Working Classes) organized the First National Congress of Women Workers, with the participation of more than four thousand rural and urban delegates from all over the country.

For the feminists, the creche movement was part of a broader effort to redefine family roles and women's struggle for autonomy,³ while for women on the urban periphery it tended to be part of a more general participation in neighbourhood social movements, where the 'woman question' was not posed so explicitly. The very act of involvement, however, placed them in a new, public space, and exposed them to new experiences which transcended the domestic space. It is worth emphasizing that in the São Paulo periphery, the protagonists were essentially housewives who did not work for wages, although many—not all—of them had it in mind to do so. This reveals the primordial character of the neighbourhood struggle for improvements in the conditions of local life.

While the feminists engage in such struggle as a form of opposition to their traditional role as 'mother', in the sense of redefining it through public institutions that take upon themselves the education of children, it is precisely as a fulfilment of the role of 'mother' that women participate in these movements. They seek improvement in the conditions of life of their family, better opportunities for education and nutrition for their children, through struggles for better urban infrastructure in their neighbourhoods in the form of creches, health posts, and so on. The role of mother motivates and legitimates their leaving the home for the public sphere, whether in paid work or in political activity.⁴ The feminists leave the home with the deliberate intention of transforming this role.

Unity, without these differences made clearly explicit, was the mark of the women's movement until the beginning of the 1980s at least, when the various groups remained united around particular issues and the opposition struggle for democracy. Motives and perspectives varied, in accordance with different social conditions, and feminism was restricted, as an ideology and a practice, to one sector only of the women's movement. Alleging the priority of the fight against authoritarianism and the inequalities which existed in Brazilian society, some tendencies relegated the feminist problem to a secondary plane. There was the usual opposition between tendencies—linked to organized political groups—which gave priority to general struggles, seeking to impose their programme and to relegate the woman question to insignificance, and the tendency which took feminism as its banner, defending the autonomy of the women's movement.

Even within the sector which defined itself as feminist, divisions remained between two principal tendencies. The first, more concerned with the public activity of women, directed its energies to their political organization, concentrating upon issues relating to work, the law, and the redistribution of power between the sexes. This tendency worked above all through pressure groups. The other tendency was primarily concerned with the fluid terrain of subjectivity, with inter-personal relations, and

³ F. Rosenberg, 'O movimento de mulheres e a abertura política no Brasil: o caso da creche', *Cadernos de Pesquisa* 51, 1984.

⁴ C. Sarti, 'É assim que a gente traz (ser mulher na periferia urbana)', mimeographed dissertation, University of São Paulo, 1985. On the participation of women in social movements, see T.P.R. Caldeira, 'Mujeres, cotidianidad y política', in E. Jelin, org., *Ciudadanía y identidad: la mujer en los movimientos sociales en América Latina*, Geneva 1987.

saw the private world as its privileged sphere of action. It made its presence felt principally in study, discussion or shared living groups.

Consolidation of the Movement

From 1978 onwards, as the women's movement consolidated its position within the emerging array of political forces, new paths were presenting themselves, and differences were becoming more apparent. New spaces were opened up for political discussions of general interest, and the old opposition between general and specific struggles lost much of its strength, making it possible for women to focus more on their own problems. An explicitly feminist discourse emerged, in which gender relations were the point at issue.¹⁵ Feminist ideas permeated the social arena, not only through the activity of particular groups but also in response to the receptive climate of demands of a modernizing society. In the attempt to address innumerable concerns—above all, those of a female population which, in going out to occupy public spaces and to work for wages, lacked new points of personal and social reference—the media opened up space for the woman question, and thus conferred, albeit indirectly, greater visibility and credibility upon the social movement. Feminist groups spread through the country; the feminist movement achieved significant penetration in occupational associations, parties and unions, giving legitimacy to women as a specific social subject. In the congressional elections of 1978, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, groups of women involved themselves for the first time in electoral campaigns, retaining their own distinctive propaganda and making support for a candidate conditional upon his or her commitment to their demands.

Nineteen-eighty was the year of the most intense mobilization of women's groups as a collective movement, bringing together women in very different situations. São Paulo was the site of the Second Congress of Paulista Women, attended by more than four thousand women. This high-point, however, was also the moment at which internal conflicts within the women's movement began to be revealed more clearly.¹⁶ The movement was being radicalized by the appearance of themes which touched more openly and directly upon the issue of gender relations, as in the marches and protests against cases where women had been beaten or murdered by their husband. In Belo Horizonte (in the state of Minas Gerais) feminist groups organized in August 1980 the Centre for the Defence of Women's Rights, a pioneer initiative repeated in other cities.

¹⁵ The range of issues that have been raised is reflected in the book *Mulheres em Movimento*, organized by the Women's Project of the Cultural Action Institute (IPAC) in Rio de Janeiro, as well as in the feminist press whose principal organ since 1980 has been the São Paulo journal *Mulherio*. With varied weight in different parts of the movement, discussion has concerned education, law, work, health, means of communication, sexuality, abortion, creches, and sexual violence, in addition to such questions as new knowledge, new forms of expression and new interpersonal relationships.

¹⁶ Wide-ranging discussions of the internal contradictions and conflicts in the women's movement can be found in the analysis of Moraes (op. cit., 1982 and 1985); A. Goldberg, 'Feminismo em regime autoritário: as experiências do movimento de mulheres no Rio de Janeiro', 12th World Congress of IPAC, 1982; M. Schmink, 'Women in Brazilian "Abertura" Politics', *Signs* 7/1, 1981; H. Pontes, 'Do palco aos bastidores: o sos Mulher e as práticas feministas contemporâneas', mimeographed dissertation, UFCH da UNICAMP, 1986.

In São Paulo the issue of violence against women was broached at the Second Congress of Paulista Women, and taken up again in the Women's Meeting at Valinhos, from which there arose the idea for the creation of *SOS Mulher* (SOS Women), brought to fruition in October 1980. In Rio de Janeiro a Committee against Violence was formed, and in October 1981 *SOS Mulher* opened in Porto Alegre in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. These bodies sought to give legal and psychological support to women who were the victims of violence.

Unity Undone

The 1979 amnesty and the return of women exiles, often influenced in their personal life and political activity by direct experience of European feminism, also contributed to the strengthening of the feminist tendency within the movement. But while the issue of violence kept the flame of the movement alive during 1980, the year 1981 might be called the year of 'internal violence',¹⁷ on account of the explosive tensions which had been building up. The difficulties of coping with unity in diversity—particularly as differences were not made perfectly explicit—led to the erosion of the relationship between feminist groups and the others ('women's groups'). Unity had been established in a vacuum and could not be sustained when the mere fact of being an opposition no longer sufficed to bond the movement together. It was precisely the fundamentally 'political' character of the women's movement, to the detriment of issues relating specifically to women as such, which was the motive for the growing discontent of the current identified with feminism as a struggle against sexual oppression.

In addition there were conflicts within feminism itself. Differences between the groups, and their social heterogeneity, were accentuated with the rise of the gay and lesbian movement; the interconnections with the black movement also highlighted the difficulty of coping with difference within feminism. These cleavages were faced by the women's movement, to a greater or lesser extent, in all the states in the country where feminism had taken hold. As feminist groups began to demand space for their specificity, it became impossible to continue with united actions; the idea of a Women's Federation, which had gone the rounds in the movement, seemed further than ever from realization. The splitting of the 8th of March celebrations in São Paulo in 1981 was a sign of things to come. As Moraes noted, 'the women's movement was in pieces, and time had shown that feminism had to appear in new forms.'¹⁸

In the 1980s, at the same time that social consciousness of the oppression of women was spreading through the country, the feminist groups and their activities were fragmenting. The nuclei lost their generic character, and organized themselves around specific issues. The groups which had formed around the banner of women's oppression melted away, and more specialized activities, with more technical and professional perspectives, gained ground. Particular mention should be made of groups which developed around problems in the areas of health, sexuality and

¹⁷ The expression is taken from Moraes, *op. cit.*, 1983.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

reproduction, offering medical services and psychological assistance, and putting feminist demands into practice. This was the case with the SOS Corps of Recife (in the state of Pernambuco), the São Paulo Women's Refuge, the Grajaú Women's Refuge (also in the state of São Paulo), and the Sexuality and Health Collective (São Paulo). These groups were created out of the critique of government policy in the area of health, which until recently ignored women, or simply sought to impose programmes of control, without any attempt to consult the people affected. They represented an advance in that they showed 'the maturity of a movement, which, without abdicating its authority, conducts a dialogue with the state, proposing courses of action to it'.¹⁹

There was also a broad development of research on women, particularly in the social sciences, demography, psychology, literature, communications, and history. From a picture of individual initiatives in an academic atmosphere at first unreceptive or even hostile, a movement took place towards a phase of growing expansion and institutionalization. Centres of Women's Studies have now been created in universities in eight different states, and their presence is increasingly felt in scientific associations and meetings. Although women's studies are now recognized as legitimate, problems remain, particularly as regards their isolation, and the lack of dialogue with the human sciences as a whole—the tendency to 'ghettoization'—persists.²⁰ In terms of publishing, there has been a veritable explosion of books, articles and journals on the condition of women. Finally, a number of documentation centres have been founded, among them the CIM (Women's Information Centre) in São Paulo, which has accumulated a mass of material particularly relating to feminist organizations and the women's movement in the country.

The events of 1982 gave evidence of a movement which was still an active force, but whose forms of manifesting itself had diversified. The Bertha Lutz Tribunal was held in São Paulo, a spectacle organized by a group of feminists which put on trial the discrimination to which the working woman is subjected, along with drama, music and dance on the same theme. The intention was to seek a new language, to give a cultural expression to the political struggle through an innovative aesthetic venture. In September of the same year the First National Festival of Women in the Arts was organized in São Paulo, coordinated by Ruth Escobar and financed by *Novas* magazine from the Abril publishing house. In addition to displaying women's creativity in the arts (cinema, theatre, literature, music, dance, and plastic arts), the festival was an event in itself, with women's delegations present from various parts of the world. It provided space for the presentation of feminist works from different parts of the country, using varied audiovisual and theatrical techniques and resources. The festival was all the more animated by the climate of effervescence which preceded the November elections.

The 1982 Elections

At the end of 1982 elections took place for Congress, and, for the first time

¹⁹ C. Barraso, *A saúde da mulher*, São Paulo 1985.

²⁰ Costa et al., op. cit.

since 1965, for state governors. The two-party system imposed in 1965 had been abolished, and the opposition now divided into three parties: the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), the heir of the previous opposition party, the MDB, which retained its character as an opposition front, and contained within its ranks the orthodox Communists of the PCB; the Workers' Party (PT), organized around the union leaders who appeared at the end of the 1970s and had as their principal representative Luis Inacio da Silva (Lula), alongside intellectuals and the remnants of leftist groups in the country; and the Democratic Labour Party (PDT), whose legacy of populist *trabalhismo* went back to Getulio Vargas, and whose leader, Leonel Brizola, exiled during the years of the dictatorship, was elected governor of Rio de Janeiro after his return under amnesty.

These elections were particularly important because of the changes they brought about in the structures of power. The majority support for the opposition parties gave them the government of the economically most important states, reducing the power of the pro-regime PDS to the poor states of the north-east, dominated by old-fashioned clientelism.

In view of the internal division of the women's movement and the fragmented character of feminism, the women who participated in the electoral campaign organized themselves in accordance with their support for different opposition candidates, particularly from the PT and the PMDB. This division then defined their future relationship with the authorities who took power. Feminist demands were included in the debate over the questions of party reorganization and the election campaign, involving all the issues under discussion in the country. Some candidates, in the PT and PMDB, identified themselves with feminism, within a general context of launching new initiatives on ecology, the drugs problem, and the Indian, homosexual and black issues.

After the 1982 elections the trend to more specialized and less general forms of activity grew stronger. A number of women took up positions in public administration, and the shift in the balance of power fuelled hopes that more space would become available for demands to be met. With greater penetration in the fabric of society, feminist activity took on a sectoral pattern. Feminists in public administration, in their political groups, or in their specific professional activities are active in the sense that they have incorporated their perspectives on life and work into these areas. This more sectoral pattern of activity, in place of the unity around general principles which marked the early phase, characterizes the women's movement today.

Women Workers in the Countryside

A new development which merits attention concerns the mobilization of women workers in the countryside. In 1978 the Third Congress of CONTAG (the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers) took place at a time when echoes of the demands of urban workers were being heard in its affiliated unions and professional associations. A programme for the redistribution of land was proposed, with women not even mentioned as possible beneficiaries: 'In speaking of the advantage of family plots, they

disregard the woman's efforts, although all their arguments would be invalid were it not for the presence of this figure in the family', in view of the significance of the woman's role in production of this type.²¹ Her work is not recognized as such, but is considered as part of her domestic responsibilities.

Politically active women are not a novelty in the countryside. It is a recurrent feature of our history that women whose husbands become peasant leaders and are killed at the landowners' behest take their place in the struggle. What is unusual is that meetings should have been held to discuss the specific situation of the rural woman worker. First regional and then state-level meetings took place, culminating in 1986 with the first National Congress of Rural Women, attended by 350 delegates from all over the country. Goals shared by all rural women, regardless of their conditions of work, are the struggle for the unionization of women and the demand that title to the land be granted to women, whether they have families or are single, as well as to men. This last demand was a constant feature in discussions over the National Agrarian Reform Plan proposed by the present government, and an issue which, along with the increasingly severe tensions over land conflicts, has fired the spirits of rural workers in recent years.

The creation of a top-level government organization to stimulate, promote and guarantee equality between the sexes was a recommendation of the World Plan for the Decade, confirmed in 1980 at the Copenhagen Conference, primarily on the basis of an evaluation of existing national experiences.²² Largely as a result of the authoritarian character of the regime, however, this proposal was discussed neither at government nor at non-government level, neither among the parties nor among the social movement. With the issue of its own autonomy always on its agenda, the women's movement ran a course parallel to official institutional policy; there was no dialogue or exchange. Only with the establishment of a democratic government in 1982 did debate really begin about such an official agency. The shift in the balance of power, with the election of opposition candidates in the most developed states, opened the way for Councils on the Condition of Women, concerned with the definition of policy with respect to women, within the administrative structure of state government. The pioneer states were São Paulo and Minas Gerais. In August 1985, on the initiative of the São Paulo State Council and the State Secretary for Public Security, five reception posts (*delegacias de defesa da mulher*) were set up in São Paulo City and some towns in the interior to assist women who had been the victims of rape, beatings or any other form of violence. This initiative was designed to overcome the restraints which inhibit women from reporting crimes of a sexual nature, and for this reason the posts are staffed exclusively by women. The São Paulo Council has made it a priority to train and equip police and legal officers for work of this kind, and the thirty-three posts now spread across eighteen states enjoy great popular support.

²¹ C. Spindel, 'A "invisibilidade social" do trabalho da mulher na agricultura', mimeographed paper, 9th Annual Meeting of ANPOCS.

²² A.O. Costa, *A política governamental e a mulher*, São Paulo 1985.

The range of activity of the Councils on the Condition of Women is surprising, particularly in view of their relative lack of access to public resources. From a primarily symbolic activity, allowing the dissemination of social consciousness of sexual inequalities, the Councils have been able to go further and gradually break down the impenetrable structure of state administrations, providing a steadily growing space for effective policies directed to the needs of women. Today these Councils exist in four more states, and have also been set up, at municipal level, in twelve cities in Brazil.

The National Council for Women's Rights

In 1984, by which time Brazilian women had accumulated nearly ten years of experience and developed many demands, the National Campaign for Direct Elections Now, calling for direct election of the President of the Republic, set in motion a broad process of mobilization across the country. Hundreds of thousands of people marched on the streets of the largest cities bearing witness to strong popular pressure for effective participation. Although an amendment providing for direct elections was defeated in Congress, the struggle over the succession was able to build on the existing momentum. The Democratic Alliance—a heterogeneous coalition formed by the Party of the Liberal Front (PFL), a dissident faction of the government PDS, and the PMDB—launched the candidacy of Tancredo Neves for the presidency against the official candidate, Paulo Maluf. As a result of the strength of the opposition revealed in the campaign for direct elections, Neves was elected by official Electoral College based on the National Congress. He died, however, before he could take office, an episode which moved the entire country. The New Republic, installed by indirect election, had as its first President a civilian, Jose Sarney, Tancredo's running mate for vice-president. Twenty-one years of military rule had come to an end.

The accumulated organizational experience of women forced the government to recognize the discrimination to which they were subjected in our society. From the period of Tancredo's candidacy discussions had been taking place on the creation of a Council on the Condition of Women at national level, and in September 1985 a Council for Women's Rights came into being. It constituted a historic watershed, the first time that the federal government had recognized the existence of sexual inequality and the importance of the activity of Brazilian women. The country thus began to take the first steps, at federal level, to guarantee women full citizenship within a global strategy for the construction of democracy. The multi-party character of the Council contributes to the range of its activities, which have passed from merely formal declarations to the terrain of concrete action.

The 1986 Elections and the Constituent Assembly

To the effervescence which generally precedes congressional elections there was added in 1986 the contest over the choice of a new Constituent Assembly, composed of the federal deputies and senators elected by each state, and responsible for writing a constitution for the consolidation of a still fragile democracy. Although Brazil at present has a civilian

government, the remnants of the authoritarianism imposed on the country by military governments from 1964 onwards still make themselves felt. It is sufficient to remember that the president of the country was chosen not in a direct election but through an indirect process centred on Congress. In this context, the new Magna Carta represents the decisive step towards an effective transformation at the institutional level.

The efforts of political groups and economic interests active in the country are concentrated at present on guaranteeing their representation in the new order. Women who have been politically active over the last decade are among them, and the 559-member Constituent Assembly contains a substantial group of twenty-six women. This has no historical precedent in Brazil. In 1933 Carlota Pereira de Queiroz was the only woman deputy to enter the Constituent Assembly,²³ and in 1946 no woman was elected. Indeed, the women elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1986 outnumber the cumulative total of women elected to Congress in the whole history of the Republic. A further advance is the presence of a black woman among them.

The composition of the bloc of women members is heterogeneous. In terms of party affiliation, the Left elected a higher proportion of women than the Right. Thus the right-wing PDS elected 6 per cent of members but only 4 per cent of women members; the centre-right PFL elected 26 per cent and 27 per cent respectively, and the centrist PMDB 53 per cent and 38 per cent; the Left, including the Communists (both pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese, now legalized), the Socialists and the Workers' Party (PT), took 5 per cent of the seats but elected 15 per cent of the women. The women's bloc has a different composition from that of Congress, with the balance tilted a little more to the left, and a probable tendency to more progressive action. The regional balance is less favourable, as the less influential states account for the bulk of the women elected.

The election of women was not directly linked to their activity in the political arena. Some are political militants or feminists of long standing; others owe their election to the political prestige of their father or husband. One thing, however, appears certain. The significant weight of the women's movement among the social struggles in the country in recent years has put onto the Congress agenda such issues as equal wages, equality in the civil code, and the provision of creches.

After a period of fragmentation, then, feminism has become institutionalized, above all through participation in the apparatus of the state, reflecting its recognition and legitimacy and providing an effective channel for pressure on the decision-making process. But it also expresses its loss of ground as a social movement, at the level of civil society. The

²³ Another woman, Almerinda Gama, was present in the Constituent Assembly as one of the forty 'class' representatives (twenty from the employers' union and twenty from the workers' unions) who also participated in the writing of the 1934 Constitution. See Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher, *Mulher e Constituinte*, Brasília 1985.

women's social movement made one thing clear, and this is its most evident gain. Its impact has given the problem of gender identity a social presence of which account must now be taken. For this reason, although the final shape of the constitution has not yet been clearly delineated, everything indicates that the recent social struggles of Brazilian women will echo through the new institutional order.

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Roberto Unger and the Politics of Empowerment

The largest industrial power of the Southern hemisphere has recently completed one of the most protracted and divisive processes of constitution-making in modern history. The fruits of nineteen months of labour by the Constituent Assembly of Brazil have already aroused violent reactions. 'Clauses on employment worthy of Cuba, on foreign enterprise reminiscent of Romania, on freedom of property fit for Guinea-Bissau. Not the faintest odour of civilization'—so Roberto Campos from the right, Minister of Planning and Ambassador in London for the generals, today Senator of the cattlebarons of Mato Grosso, on the practical shape of the new charter. By coincidence, the same months have seen the publication in the Northern hemisphere of a uniquely ambitious exercise in constitutional theory by a Brazilian-American, which seeks to lay out the design not only of a polity but of a concomitant economy and society. Its author, Roberto Mangabeira Unger, comes from one of the most famous political families of Bahia. His grandfather Otavio was Foreign Minister under the Old Republic, an oligarch of legendary eloquence who oscillated between fascism and liberalism in

opposition to Vargas, while his grand-uncle João founded and led the small Brazilian Socialist Party. Roberto, a by-product of his grandfather's exile in the USA under the Estado Novo, had a mixed upbringing in the two countries. For the past decade he has taught critical legal theory at Harvard Law School, with recurrent forays into his native land—where he has been an acute critic of the new constitution from the left, for multiplying fictive welfare rights while legalizing further military fiat: Unger to his US audience, Mangabeira to his Brazilian. Like Edward Said or Salman Rushdie, he forms part of that constellation of Third World intellectuals, active and eminent in the First World without being assimilated by it, whose number and influence are destined to grow.

The originality of Unger's enterprise lies in its combination of aims: '*Politics* presents an explanatory theory of society and a programme of social reconstruction. The theory works towards a radical alternative to Marxism. The programme advances a radical alternative to social democracy.'¹ It is the surprise of this two-edged challenge that gives the work its peculiar force. The vehicle chosen for it, however, does not always serve this purpose best. Crisply defined at the outset, Unger's project subsequently waylays and disperses itself through sheer multiplication of topics and repetition of themes. The huge spread-eagled text of *Politics* stretches over (so far) a thousand pages. The nominal organization of its three books by no means corresponds to its real architecture, whose foundation actually lies in a preceding work, *Poiesis—An Essay on Personality*, and whose lantern—as it were—will presumably be the ethics promised as 'Part II' of the whole in *False Necessity*. Intellectual ambition has won an expensive victory over political communication in such gigantism. In virtually any work of practical advocacy, there is some trade-off between length and effect. Here the impact of often striking programmatic proposals is inescapably reduced by the extravagant mass of unbound ideation surrounding them.

Unger's prose, unusual in the intensity of its rhetorical pressure, does not really relieve this difficulty. It displays an unremitting stylistic energy in the quest for a vocabulary free from every theoretical jargon or political cliché, with many memorable and felicitous results. But it can also resort to a less fortunate, quasi-revivalist register: 'Try to understand, reader, by an act of imaginative empathy, the bitterness a person might feel when he discovered that doctrines invented to emancipate and enlighten had now become instruments of confusion and surrender . . . It was an instance of illusion passing into prejudice. You wanted to write a book to set things right'—'When the larger argument falls into confusion and obscurity, when I stagger and I stumble, help me. Refer to the purpose described in this book and revise what I say in the light of what I want.'² Disdaining

¹ *Politics, a Work in Constructive Theory* is the general title of Unger's opus, of which three volumes have appeared so far: *Social Theory: its Situation and Task*, or 'A Critical Introduction'; *False Necessity*, or 'Part I: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy'; and *Plasticity into Power*, or 'Variations on Themes—Comparative-Historical Studies on the Institutional Conditions of Economic and Military Success'. All were published by Cambridge University Press in late 1987. A shortened version of this consideration of Unger's work appeared earlier in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 13–19 January 1989.

² *Social Theory*, pp. 78–79; 9.

any conventional apparatus of references, Unger appends instead an omnibus reading-list to *False Necessity*, whose concluding recommendation for the study of cultural revolution (after Hegel and Kierkegaard) is: 'See *TV Guide*'—an unwise flourish, liable to bring recent preachers of the screen too readily to mind. It would be wrong to make overmuch of this histrionic side of the work; but vibrato interpellations intended to heighten attention risk distracting it from the serious core of Unger's argument.

Beyond Social Democracy

The central premise of *Politics* is that 'the present forms of decentralized economies and pluralistic democracies (markets based on absolute property rights, democracies predicated on the sceptical quiescence of the citizenry) are neither the necessary nor the best expressions of inherited ideals of liberty and equality. They frustrate the very goals for whose sake we uphold them.'³ The aim of the work is to develop a persuasive alternative beyond the limits of social-democracy to these congealed forms—'a particular way of reorganizing governments and economies that promises to realize more effectively both aspects of the radical commitment: the subversion of social division and hierarchy and the assertion of will over custom and compulsion.' Such institutional reconstruction is for Unger inseparable from cultural transvaluation, or a 'radical politics of personal relations' that will 'allow us to connect leftism and modernism'.⁴

These contemporary political purposes are set within a much vaster theory of history, from which they receive their warrant. Unger constructs this vision from a double rejection: principally of Marxism, for adhering to a vision of the past composed of a limited number of modes of production, conceived as integrated orders capable of replication in different epochs or environments—if also all other variants of 'deep structure theory'; and secondarily of sociological or historiographic positivism, for tending to deny the existence of societal totalities or qualitative discontinuities at all. Against the latter Unger insists that distinct and decisive structures do indeed exist—what he calls 'formative contexts', as opposed to the 'formed routines' subject to them. Against the former he argues that each such structure is at once internally dissociable and historically unique—the elements that comprise it do not have to fit together, and the combination of them never recurs. Formative contexts, so understood, exercise a formidable constraint over all social practices, forcing them into a specific mould of predictable routines. But they also embody a fundamental contingency, since there is no intrinsic logic binding their constituent parts together. The conventional opposition in modern politics between reform and revolution, or piecemeal versus overall change—the one potentially ineffectual, the other hypothetically lethal—is therefore misguided. Formative contexts can be disassembled by bits, in partial moves that by the same token effect basic alterations. The real contrast is between 'context-revising' and 'context-preserving' conflicts. But there is no unbridgeable gulf between these. Rather they form a continuum, in which disputes over routines can always suddenly escalate into battles over structures.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Why is such escalation perpetually possible? Unger's answer appeals to a transhistorical attribute of the species which he calls its 'negative capability'. The meaning he attaches to this term is virtually the opposite of that intended by Keats. What it denotes is active will and restless imagination pitted against all circumstance or convention, a constitutive human capacity to transcend every given context by negating it in thought or deed. As such, Unger argues, its exercise has gradually expanded since the dawn of civilization, giving history what cumulative (though not irreversible) direction it appears to have. Today the goal of politics must be to increase the space of that negative capability, by creating institutional contexts permanently open to their own revision—so diminishing the gap between structures and routines, and 'disentrenching' social life as a whole.

Such disentanglement represents both a pragmatic and a moral value. In the past, the economic and military success of states always depended on the degree to which they achieved what Unger terms 'plasticity', or the ability to promote a 'pitiless recombination' of the factors of production, communication or destruction to meet changing conditions or opportunities. But this kind of institutional flexibility typically consorted with predatory or despotic power—the rule of nomadic conquerors, agrarian bureaucracies, or mercantile oligarchies. Once modern popular sovereignty starts to emerge, however, it acquires normative force as a principle of social emancipation as well as material prosperity. For now the fixity of all traditional hierarchies and dependencies may be seen as a false necessity that can be undone by the general will. The advent of the *Rechtsstaat*, universal suffrage and social security are only the hesitant beginnings of this process. Unger looks beyond them towards a more radically 'empowered democracy', capable of freely remaking every dimension of its common life. His own programme for empowerment includes proposals for the reorganization of government, property, work, and personal relations alike, in a spirit intended to dispel the 'received, superstitious contrast' between liberalism and socialism.

The Philosophical Premises

Within Unger's extended construction, there are three distinct theoretical planes. The first and founding one is a philosophical anthropology. It is set out not in *Politics* but in the preceding work on which much of this trilogy depends, *Passion—an Essay on Personality* (1984). There Unger postulated a two-fold model of the self: as on the one hand endowed with an infinite mobility in always finite conditions, on the other possessed of a constitutive yet perilous longing for others. The external world and all character are perpetually subject to transcendence by the self, but the self is subject to an unlimited need for others that is also an unlimited danger—of 'craven dependence' or collective conformity. There is no constant human nature, only an inherent tension between attachment to and fear of others. Unger improbably presents this vision as a restatement of the 'Christian-romantic image of man', fortified by a touch of Nietzsche. In fact, what is striking is its similarity with Sartre's account of consciousness in *Being and Nothingness*—the quicksilver capacity of the for-itself to elude all given determinations and the tormented dialectic of its relations with others. But where the early Sartre remained essentially asocial, his conclusions negative, Unger seeks to give a positive resolution to the same

existential premises by projecting a society based on them. 'It is necessary to enact the modernist ideal as a form of social life.'⁵ The unifying principle of such a form would be empowerment. Unger uses this notion simultaneously for the conversion of the individual capacity for transcendence into a collective power of context-revision; and for the 'mastery' of each individual's exposure to others, which requires satisfaction simultaneously of the need for passionate engagement and the need to avoid menacing dependence in intersubjective relations. The strain of yoking together these two quite different senses of 'empowerment'—the second, visibly a willful graft on the first—is pervasive in Unger's work. The two underlying ideals remain in effect dissociated, their forcible union producing the characteristically dissonant appeals to the paired virtues of 'ardour and gentleness', 'greatness and sweetness' that are a feature of his writing.⁶

The dominance of the first concern, inscribed if not avowed in his existential starting-point, emerges much more unambiguously once Unger moves to the historical issues which form the second major plane of his work. For Sartre, when he shifted onto the terrain of history in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, the 'negative motor' of human development was scarcity. For Unger, the motor is negative only in name, through whimsical annexation of a term from Keats whose meaning he inverts. The driving force of history is actually the perpetual positive disposition of human beings to transcend their inherited contexts—development as *dépassement*. Scarcity and the practico-inert do not disappear altogether. But they are downgraded to secondary obstructions or intermissions in the pathway of this revisionary will, in the guise respectively of a need for 'coercive surplus extraction' (long superseded) and a persistence of 'sequential effects' (tending to diminish). The formal outline of Unger's theory of history can thus be read as an optimistic transcoding of Sartre's.

But unlike Sartre, Unger goes on to propose substantive analyses of major episodes in the course of history. Here his key conceptual instrument is the notion of formative context. This is presented expressly as an alternative to the mode of production in the Marxist tradition, rejected as too rigid and replicable. A formative context is something looser and more singular—an accidental institutional and ideological cluster that regulates both normal expectations and routine conflicts over the distribution of key resources. The contemporary North Atlantic example thus includes, for Unger: constitutional division of governmental powers, partisan rivalry incongruously related to class, market economies based on absolute property rights, bureaucratic supervision of business activity, differential unionization, taylorized work organization, vocabularies of private community, civic equality and voluntary contract.⁷ The price for the looseness of configuration prized by its author is, in other words, vagueness of boundaries and indiscriminacy of elements. For the 'tangible and intangible' *resources* on whose control the whole definition of a formative context depends are never demarcated. The result is that the concept lacks any hierarchy of determination, and its only law of motion is cyclical

⁵ *Passion—An Essay on Personality*, p. 17.

⁶ *Passion*, p. 270; *False Necessity*, p. 393.

⁷ *Social Theory*, p. 152.

—since a true dynamic has been identified from the outset not with the working, but precisely with the *breaking* of contexts by negative capability.

Unger provides two principal examples of such historical cycles. The first, and much the most extended, is what he calls the 'reversion cycle' in agrarian bureaucratic empires—Han, Roman, Byzantine, Korean, Mughal. These states, he argues, essentially rested on a monetary economy rather than coerced labour or barter. For a commercial agriculture, generating cash taxes was the precondition of the political autonomy of a central government capable of withstanding the fissiparous power of local magnates. The normal base of these aristocrats was the large, autarkic estate; production for the market, on the other hand, was typically undertaken by small independent cultivators. The contradiction of the imperial regime was to be socially solidary with the dominance of the nobility, but economically dependent on the vitality of the peasantry. To keep magnate pressures at bay, the state could resort to a limited repertoire of policies, found again and again in the most widely separate epochs and areas: recruitment of an upstart bureaucratic staff, creation of a service nobility, or implantation of military-agrarian colonies. But over time, aristocratic power in the countryside all but invariably prevailed. The consequence was then the fatal erosion or disappearance of small-holders, the contraction of output for the market, the decline of fiscal catchment by the state, leading eventually to a full 'reversion crisis' or relapse into a natural economy, and therewith the disintegration of the imperial order.⁸ Only Mediaeval Europe and Tokugawa Japan escaped this cycle, because there the peasantry could withstand landlord exactions since there was no united front of power and privilege arrayed against it—in the absence of a bureaucratic state in Europe, and of a resident aristocracy in Japan; though the Ottoman and Ch'ing Empires succeeded in mitigating the cycle by drawing on their nomadic backgrounds to strengthen central checks to magnate autonomy, and so stabilize small agrarian property longer.

This is an ingenious and elegant schema. But it suffers from a fundamental empirical flaw. In pre-modern societies, there was no general affinity between peasants and markets of the kind presumed by Unger—quite the contrary. The overwhelming priority of the immediate producers was normally subsistence production for their own households. Commercial agriculture, where it emerged—far more patchily and precariously than Unger suggests—tended rather to be associated with the marketable surplus of medium or large estates whose proprietors were not tied to the needs of their own reproduction in the same way, because of the latitude of their material base. The most spectacular example, of course, was farming in the late Roman Republic and the Principate, where the advance of monetization spelt not the rise but a savage depression of the small-holder, as oligarchs amassed huge concentrations of land and servile labour for market production, and cash relations acquired historically unprecedented intensity. Unger registers this sequence, but not the depth of its discrepancy with his thesis.

Moreover, if the development of Classical Rome effectively inverted the relation he postulates between markets and magnates, the evolution of

⁸ *Plasticity into Power*, pp. 13–25.

Mediaeval Europe upsets no less his scenario for peasants and states. For having argued that the eclipse of centralized state machinery in the Dark Ages permitted the emergence of a degree of village autonomy in the countryside that was the key to feudal dynamism, Unger has no ready explanation for the scale of the crisis that overtook the latter in the fourteenth century. In fact, to account for what he deems its avoidance of 'outright' reversion, he is driven to invoking just the opposite of his initial principle, namely the vigour of 'the ~~non~~-commercial parts' of the rural economy centred on the peasant plot and village community.⁹ At the same time, he notes that the resolution of the crisis saw a strengthening of centralized aristocratic power in the new monarchies, rather than a weakening of it. The original terms of the argument are thus switched or scrambled in the two best-known chapters of the world-story it sets out to tell.

The Genealogy of Modernity

The analytic of pre-modernity in *Plasticity into Power* has its sequel in a genealogy of modernity in *False Necessity*. There Unger's concern is to establish the origins and nature of the formative context of the present OECD zone. He does so by means of a critique of what he calls its 'mythical history', shared by conservatives, liberals and Marxists alike—that is, the view that there was a convergent, irresistible logic in the long-run process which led to the contemporary configuration of market economy, mass-production industry and parliamentary democracy. Unger argues that this package was adventitious. The major institutional clusters of the West emerged separately, without particular congruence. Politically, a liberal constitutionalism of eighteenth-century cast became improbably coupled to mass parties, for which it had never been designed, in the course of the nineteenth century. The corporation came to dominate the organization of private property only later, after hard-fought contests against it. Assembly-line industry, exemplified by Fordism, arose more recently still, and is already receding. Yet out of these disparate histories a pervasive status quo has crystallized. Marked by preventively deadlocked government, unconditionally held property entitlements, massively concentrated business units and rigidly hierarchical work processes, this conformation was dictated by no immanent technological or social necessity. There was a real historical alternative to it, represented by the forces of 'petty-bourgeois radicalism' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unger uses this term in a broad sense for all those who resisted elite politics, big capital, large factories, unregulated markets, whether in the name of populist or utopian socialist ideals. His crucial claim is that smaller forms of property and production, based on flexible forms of work-organization, were just as progressive technically—and therefore viable economically—as giant trusts and mass-production industry, as the experience of modern farming or selected textiles was to show. Their stabilization in either individual or cooperative form, however, required support by the state, a characteristic goal of their radical spokesmen from Proudhon or Lassalle to Demarest Lloyd. It was the *political* defeat of programmes like theirs which sealed the fate of this potential and preferable path of development, not any sociological impossibility of its realization.

⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

What then decided the political issue itself? Unger's answer is essentially that the petty-bourgeois alternative posed more of a threat to the interests of traditional elites than its (should we say—bourgeois?) rival, which prevailed because it encountered less resistance from entrenched agrarian or patrician interests. Hence a realistic popular radicalism was crushed or constricted by force. In the terms of Unger's general historical theory, this is an appeal to the weight of 'sequential effects'—the practico-inert force of one formative context in shaping the next. Figured against these, the petty-bourgeoisie represents the front-line of 'negative capability' of the modern epoch, as the peasantry did in the pre-modern world in Unger's vision—the bearers of the most creative economic forces. The industrial proletariat, creature of mass-production and regimented work-organization, is *eo ipso* tacitly disqualified from any vanguard role in this conception. Classical claims for it are never, however, tested in a direct comparison. For here there is a very striking lacuna in Unger's counter-history of modernity. He initially defines the contemporary formative context of the West by four institutional clusters: the work-organization complex, the private-rights complex, the governmental-organization complex, and the occupational-structure complex. But when he moves to his genealogy of it, he omits the last altogether, 'for the sake of simplicity'.²⁰

Petty-Bourgeois Radicalism

Such simplification exacts a high price. For what it means is that Unger provides no analysis at all of the emergent social structure of the societies he is discussing. He rejects the use of the term capitalism for them, on the grounds that it is either too general or too particular to be helpful. The merits or otherwise of this scruple are of less moment than the ensuing absence of any overall class map of these social formations. The petty-bourgeoisie itself, the hero of Unger's parable, is in this respect virtually plucked out of thin air. For there are no surrounding class relationships into which it is inserted, in structural antagonism or dependence, affinity or ambivalence. Nobility or bourgeoisie, middle-classes or working-classes, are little more than smudges on the horizon. Indeed even the small producers themselves are only gesturally sketched. They are most consistently identified under the rubric of 'petty commodity production'—a term ostensibly taken from the vocabulary of Marx that Unger otherwise shuns. But the concept loses its direction in his usage. When Marx spoke of *einfache Warenproduktion*—'simple' commodity production—he defined it not by the scale of its output but the nature of its key input: it was that form in which the producer marketed goods without resort to wage-labour (or servile dependents). For Unger, on the other hand, petty commodity production includes every kind of market enterprise short of the centralized factory and multidivisional firm—from the manufacture of cutlery in Solingen to computers in Silicon Valley. The connexion of this gamut of economic forms with even the widest notion of petty bourgeoisie is tenuous indeed. On the other hand Unger virtually ignores white-collar employees—the archetypal petit-bourgeois of the big cities from the later nineteenth-century onwards, epitomized in the *calicot* public of T.J. Clark's unforgettable portrait of Parisian popular culture of the period.²¹

²⁰ Compare *False Necessity*, pp. 69–79 with pp. 174 et seq.

²¹ *The Painting of Modern Life*, London 1984, pp. 205–58

Some sustained recovery of the forgotten visions of emancipation of small producers, whether populist or socialist, is an attractive and overdue project. The passionate, unfashionable plea Unger enters for the bearers of petty-bourgeois radicalism is in this regard likely to have only good effect. He is right too, of course, in insisting on their crucial role in the European insurgencies of the 1840s or American of the 1890s. But the argument that they could have remade the world for the better, wholesale, demands much more than this. The structural heterogeneity and ambiguity of the petty-bourgeoisie alone, emphasized in nearly all the classical studies of it, militated against anything like that. Unger, lacking any theory of different class capacities for collective action, which must depend on a general account of social structure, overlooks these traits and their implications. Astonishingly, *Politics* contains not a single substantive reflection on—scarcely even a mention of—fascism: the political movement of the twentieth century for which petty-bourgeois forces, above all, provided the shock troops. Unger, after criticizing a 'mythical history' of modernity, describes his own as 'schematic and polemical', even frankly 'speculative'.¹² But, even short of fuller empirical documentation, the structure of his argument requires comparative controls of a kind he does not venture. If it was the power of traditional elites which thwarted the success of petty-bourgeois radicalism in Victorian Europe, why did not their relative absence permit it in North America? If small property generated the virtues of flexible work-organization and ideals of democratized government, how could it rally so rapidly to the New Rome and the Third Reich?

But beyond these questions, Unger's alternative history poses a more drastic difficulty for his own theory. For it culminates in a contemporary landscape of monotonous sameness—the familiar, featureless plains of the world of G-7. In that panorama all advanced capitalist societies are subject, Unger argues, to the futile recurrence of a 'reform cycle' impotent to alter them—regularly swinging between meliorist attempts to guide investment and redistribute income, generating inflationary wage struggles that provoke loss of business confidence, followed by reactive drives to restore market dominance and fiscal discipline. The predictable movements of this pendulum he describes as an 'insult to the primacy of the will'.¹³ Their determinant is the formative context finally consolidated as a general rule of the North Atlantic and Pacific regions in the post-war epoch. The millennial growth in negative capability that Unger ascribes to the overall course of human development, instead of yielding an ever greater variety of social invention, thus paradoxically issues into an end-state of massive uniformity. The historical contingency he insists upon as the mark of true volition enigmatically generates not the play of creative diversity, but a necessitarian identity. Unger on occasion senses the problem, and offers *ad hoc* responses to it, lamely invoking the similarity of problems facing societies or the pressure of leading states on late-comers to imitate them. But within the logical structure of his thought the contradiction seems radical and insoluble.

¹² *False Necessity*, pp. 7, 176.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The Programmatic Agenda

Yet whatever the anomalies of the philosophy or history advanced by Unger, it is politics that must be decisive for judgement of his work—as its title suggests. Here, however, its reception has been ironical. For controversy has focused on everything but this. Two polar reactions to the overall merits of *Politics* are represented, on the one hand, by the capacious symposium of a dozen admiring contributors drawn from a wide range of disciplines, across 350 pages in the *Northwestern University Law Review*; on the other, by the furious commination—'Harvard's Greatest Fraud'—of *The New Republic*.¹⁴ The rancour of the latter, a zealot for the Contras, is perhaps not hard to explain. Curiously, however, in both cases the actual political programme of the book is largely ignored—as if it were too hot to handle in the depoliticized atmosphere of the United States at the hour of Dukakis and Bush. But this is unquestionably the most seminal and powerful part of the work. Unger starts by asking whether social-democracy, which he takes to be 'the single most attractive emergent model of social organization in the world today—least oppressive, most respectful of felt human needs', is for all that 'the best that mankind can hope for, for an indefinite time to come'? His answer is a firm negative. For 'social democracy makes the liberal project of the Enlightenment—the cause of liberty, equality and fraternity—unnecessarily hostage to a transitory and replaceable institutional order.'¹⁵ The pillars of this order are: a state that requires and produces a quiescent citizenry; markets ruled by property rights that are absolute in duration and scope; work-processes that are needlessly stultifying and inflexible. Social-democracy pursues its ordinary aims within the parameters they set. By contrast Unger's over-riding objective is to reduce such fixed distance between contexts and routines, by making the fundamental institutions of society available for regular (as opposed to exceptional, or revolutionary) revision.

The programmatic proposals which ensue are systematically addressed to the existing forms of power, property and labour. Unger criticizes what he sees as the modal type of Western liberal state for effectively paralysing significant change from above, and precluding it from below, by constitutional checks and balances originally and deliberately designed for the restrictive purposes of eighteenth-century notables. But he does not endorse any call for a more direct democracy, along conciliar or other lines, which he regards as little more than an imaginary inversion of the prevailing model. Instead he argues for 'dualist' constitutions conferring rival power and initiative on two centres of authority, president and parliament, favouring creative conflict between them, with rapid resolution of deadlocks by popular consultation. The principle of this conception is an 'overlapping' rather than separating of powers—extended to the creation of a special instance for ensuring the democratization of information inside and outside the state itself. So constructed, Unger's republic is designed to mobilize the democratic energies of its citizens rather than to neuter them.

¹⁴ 'Symposium: Roberto Mangabeira Unger's *Politics*', *Northwestern University Law Review*, Vol. 81, Summer 1987, No. 4, 'The Professor of Smashing', *The New Republic*, 19 October 1987.

¹⁵ *Falsa Necessity*, pp. 25, 27.

Yet its charter can be realized only if the economy is transformed. For 'such a democracy cannot flourish if the everyday world of work and exchange is organized in ways that not only differ from the principles of democratic government but limit their scope, undermine their influence, and disrupt their workings.'⁶ The target of Unger's critique here is the assimilation of markets as decentralized arenas of exchange, with property rights as absolute claims to divisible portions of social capital. The former are indispensable, for freedom and for efficiency; the latter are unacceptable mechanisms of inequality and privilege. Their fusion in the current economic order 'withdraws the basic terms of collective prosperity from effective democratic choice and control'.⁷ Unger's remedy is to transfer control over major productive assets to a 'rotating capital fund' which would disaggregate property rights down through a tier of capital-givers and capital-takers—an ultimate social fund controlled by the government, leasing capital to autonomous investment funds operating in given sectors, which then auction or ration resources to competitive teams of producers, for stipulated periods. Breaking-up consolidated property rights in this way would then encourage more flexible forms of work organization, characteristic of small or medium vanguard enterprises today. The workings of the market, in which final capital-takers act as 'unrestricted gamblers', would be buffered by welfare rights guaranteeing a minimum income to all citizens.

Unger completes his programme by arguing that a transformation of personal relations is the necessary counterpart of institutional change. He calls this prospect 'cultural revolution'—significantly, the only time the latter term acquires salience in his vocabulary. Its contours are much more elusive, in part because detailed treatment of them is deferred to a further volume on the 'microstructure of social life'. But two elements are already sketched. Interpersonal relations can be rewrought in the spirit of modernism by deliberate role-jumbling and confusion of expressive conventions, while the idea of a community should move from the seamless sharing of customary values to a heightening of mutual vulnerability, which accepts conflict as itself a positive value. Although these notions occur only as a tentative coda to *False Necessity*, they are of central importance to Unger, who insists that 'the qualities of our direct practical and passionate dealings always represent the ultimate object of our conflicts over the organization of society'.⁷

For sheer imaginative attack, Unger's project for social reconstruction has no contemporary counterpart. It certainly honours its promise to advance beyond—far beyond—the ambitions of social-democracy. Perhaps the best way of grasping just how radical Unger's vision is would be to compare it with that of a thinker whose intellectual energy matches his own, and whose political sympathies are not so distant. Habermas too constructs his analysis of current capitalist society in dualist fashion, and develops his critique of it in the name of a normative modernity. For him the two levels of the social order are its systems—the economy and state, the domain of strategic action, steered by the objective media of money and power, operating behind the back of individual agents; and its

⁶ Ibid., pp. 482, 483

⁷ Ibid., p. 556.

life-world—the private and public spheres that are the abode of communicative action, where intersubjective meaning and value arise, in cultural transmission or socialization. The drive of capitalist rationalization is towards the relentless colonization of the life-world by the systems—the invasion of every refuge of unforced sociability or aesthetic play by administrative rules or cash relations. For Habermas this process is pathological, and must be resisted: this is the vocation of the new social movements—ecological, pacific, feminist. But the actions of these will be for the most part experimental or defensive in scope, ‘border conflicts’ to safeguard the spaces of the life-world. What they *cannot* undertake, under pain of a dangerous regression, is any counterattack to reconquer the systems themselves. For these are necessarily beyond the intentional control of agents, as products of the structural differentiation that is a condition of modern industrial society.¹⁸ The reappropriation of an alienated economic and political order by its producers and citizens as it was once envisaged by Marx, in other words, is tabooed by Habermas. It is just this demarcation, between what can and what cannot be reclaimed for conscious collective control, that Unger rejects. The whole force of his duality is exactly the opposite. Contexts are contrasted with routines in order to show how the frontiers between them are mutable and crossable. The aim of a democratic politics is to make a routine of the revision of contexts. Intellectually more remote than Habermas from the Marxist tradition, Unger is in this respect politically much closer to it.

Unger and Socialism

At the same time the confidence and scope of his institutional programme separate him from nearly all conventional socialist discussion today. A general inhibition in this area has been a long-standing reflex of the lines of thought that descend from Marx. The all but complete silence of Habermas himself is a striking case in point. No such aversion to reconstructive detail marked the alternative utopian traditions that started with Saint-Simon, and Unger is right to claim their heritage. The boldness of his recovery of it can only be admired. But his particular proposals raise a number of difficulties. Unger’s juridical background can be seen in a certain overestimate of the independent significance of constitutional arrangements as such. For all their real importance, the effect of these is always subject to the objective structure of the state and the actual balance of social forces. The Constitution of the Fifth Republic answers fairly closely to Unger’s ideal of a governmental power divided between two potentially rival authorities, in the Presidency and the Assembly, with rapid resolution of conflicts between them by popular consultation. The cohabitation of Mitterrand and Chirac, and the successive elections of 1988 which wound it up, fit this description very well. But far from mobilizing the democratic energies of the French, the experience lowered them to a post-war nadir—a third to a half of the electorate abstaining. The example of England is even more discomfiting for Unger’s assumptions. He proceeds throughout as if the US Constitution were prototypical for the West as a whole, assailing a supposed standard model of rigid checks and balances for stymieing decisive political initiative. The complete lack of any such pattern in the UK, with its virtually untrammelled executive

¹⁸ *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. II, London 1988, pp. 338–43, 393–96.

power, appears to have escaped him. Decisional capacity is the last thing missing here. Who would argue the results are nearer a 'radical democracy'? Ironically, the most devastating critique of the Westminster State to be produced from the Left, Tom Nairn's great polemic *The Enchanted Glass*, looks on the contrary to the American Constitution as an inspiration of republican liberty. Not for the first time, socialists reciprocate in finding foreign virtues where their neighbours see domestic vices. In general, Unger pays too much attention to the legal framework of the state, and too little to its bureaucratic machinery and party outworks.

The central theme of his economic argument, on the other hand, is compelling. The disaggregation of consolidated property rights—Unger points out that these can be nominally collective as well as private—would surely be one of the basic principles of any socialism worth the name. The lexicon of leasing is likely to become greatly amplified and diversified in the transition towards one, as it is already starting to do in the East today. Unger, on the whole a shrewd observer of the Communist experience, anticipates not a few of the notes struck in *perestroika*. In the West the potential of the lease as a contractual devolution of public facilities to independent groups of producers, so 'cutting the knot tied by the speculator and the bureaucrat', was early seen by Raymond Williams as an alternative to state monopoly or commercial dominance of the means of communication. For the origins of his own conception, Unger invokes the contested name of Lassalle—as corrected by Rodbertus and Marx. His general formula of the 'rotating capital fund' suffers, however, from a noticeable vagueness about the delicate question of rotation itself—that is, how and when capital would be reallocated between enterprises, short of insolvency or take-over. The word planning does not appear in the text, although the idea is clearly present—perhaps a gesture of tact. Nor is much said about self-management, beyond an effective criticism of the Yugoslav version of it. The emancipation of labour is entrusted more to flexible work-organization than to industrial democracy. Nevertheless these lacunae do not really detract from the novelty of the main proposals.

Finally, of course, Unger's emergent cultural agenda is one that is deeply shocking to liberal assumptions. Its basic claim, that 'the ultimate stakes in politics are the fine texture of personal relations',²⁹ warranting revolutionary transformation of psychic identities and affective ties alike, is a manifest affront to the principle of a private realm shielded from public intrusion. Unger justifies it with the argument that no society is ever in practice institutionally neutral between all possible styles of personal interaction or modes of association. But selection is not the same as determination—the fact that some forms (varying according to the social order) are always excluded does not necessarily mean that others are therefore enforced. The liberal claim is simply to maximize the range of allowable choice; Unger would be on stronger ground querying that. He describes his own position as 'super-liberalism'. Despite the apparent paradox, the term is not entirely misleading insofar as he shares with the classical variety an intrinsically asocial model of human beings—since the 'negative capability' vested in every individual precedes all common ties between them. The difference is that this is an individualism without

²⁹ See *Faith Necessity*, pp. 397–401.

human nature. Only the fugitive capacity of the self for transcendence, and an ominous longing for others, define it. The first provides the passage to modernism, interpreted by Unger as a dissolution of traditional conceptions of personal character and social roles, rather than of the idea of the subject itself, as in post-structuralist versions. This is the strong sense of empowerment—the throwing off of the masks of false necessity, by individual defiance of all self-expectation or exterior convention. The second leads to the strained sense of empowerment, as 'mastery over the conditions of self-assertion', through the enhanced mutual exposure of a community enfolded not in consensus but in conflict. The connexion between the two is as forced as was Sartre's vast conjugation of the term 'freedom' in *Cahiers pour une Morale*, heroically stretched from an ontological indicative to a political imperative for just the same reason—the desire to reconcile a metaphysic of nihilation with an ethic of generosity. Unger's programme for a cultural revolution combines 'role-jumbling' with 'solidarity rights'; but whereas the former is evoked vividly enough, the latter remain impalpable—even unimaginable, as entitlements declared 'unenforceable'.²⁰

The Question of Agency

Critics have not failed to point out, with justice, the omission from Unger's preoccupations of a great deal of the ordinary agenda of politics in the West. There is little about the issues of poverty or unemployment, race or gender, armaments or environment. Although these are real limitations, perhaps their main significance lies in the detachment from the actual chequerboard of political forces they suggest. The universal endowment of negative capability generates no specific calculus of collective action—either of social interests or social abilities to realize them. The result is that Unger can on occasion argue, in all apparent seriousness, that his overall programme should appeal to conservatives, centrists, social-democrats and radicals alike!²¹ At other times he concedes that it has a 'far better chance of taking root in the reform, labour, socialist, and communist parties', or identifies certain social groups—unemployed or unskilled, petty-bourgeois or professionals—as more likely adherents to it than others.²² At others again, he argues that the escalation of political conflict is typically characterized by not a polarization but a disintegration of class allegiances, giving way in revolutionary situations to a struggle between pure 'parties of opinion'—moments of great historical decision, in their intensity, do not reveal but consume the logic of class.²³ What these vagaries amount to is a basic indeterminacy of political agency in Unger's thought. Its most telling sign is the absence of any category of the adversary. There is no equivalent to the figure of the 'foe' in Carl Schmitt. The opponents of a radical democracy remain without shape or name. Do they even exist? At most, it might seem, in the risk of an obstructive civil service.

If the subjective forces for, or against, fundamental social change remain

²⁰ *False Necessity*, p. 539.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 379–95.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 409, 549.

²³ *Social Theory*, pp. 153–4; *False Necessity*, pp. 241–23, 547.

in the end largely inscrutable, its objective conditions are little less elusive. Unger looks for the opportunities of democratic empowerment in what he calls middle-level crises today, in which the border between routines and contexts may be most readily crossed. Excluding the impact of wars or the overthrow of tyrannies, superseded in the West, he finds them in the dictates of economic growth and the pursuits of self-fulfilment. These he terms respectively the 'humdrum and ethereal' springboards for institutional reconstruction.²⁴ To the tough-minded, who might be tempted to call them trite and vaporous, Unger would no doubt reply by invoking the contrasted crises in Czechoslovakia and France of the year 1968. But whatever the validity of such a description, Unger does not in fact put much weight on the notion of structural crises at all. For on the one hand the formative context is always more or less arbitrarily stitched together in the first place, and on the other the pressure of negative capability can always burst it apart at the seams anyway. Again and again Unger insists that 'society, no matter how impregnable it seems to its inhabitants, always stands at the edge of the cliff'—since it is an order 'subject to an endless stream of petty disruptions that can escalate at any moment into more subversive conflicts'.²⁵ If the possibility of explosion is perpetual, there is little call for the work of a Richter. At the same time, and in part for the same reasons, there is not much need for a theory of transitions either. *False Necessity* skirts all discussion of the actual social processes—national turmoil, international reaction—any bid to implement its programme would unleash. Instead Unger merely offers a menu of preliminary institutional measures, as if his scheme of radical reconstruction had no losers. Intimations of harmony discount considerations of strategy, in a reminder of the other side of the utopian tradition.

That side belongs to the character of the work as a whole. For the enormous edifice of *Politics* undeniably possesses a dream-like quality. Unger himself freely describes his enterprise as speculative, and much of it lies at a visible remove from the realities of history or politics. Yet unlike nearly all others today, the dream is a salutary and emboldening one. Unger is entitled to say, as he does at one point, that its realization 'would mean reversing the defeat of the revolutionary movements and leftist experiments throughout Europe in the aftermath of World War I'—would represent one version of 'the victory of which they were robbed'.²⁶ Where else have past and future been so temerarily joined? For a long time intellectuals from the First World have been diagnosing the condition and prescribing the treatment of the Third—still the dominant mode of all writing on the subject. Here something new has occurred: a philosophical mind out of the Third World turning the tables, to become synoptist and seer of the First.

²⁴ *False Necessity*, p. 346.

²⁵ *Social Theory*, p. 205; *False Necessity*, p. 215.

²⁶ *False Necessity*, p. 308.



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Post-Kleinian Psychoanalysis and the Post-Modern

In a number of papers written in the early 1980s, I attempted to explore the social and political affiliations of Kleinian psychoanalysis in Britain.¹ I characterized some of the leading themes, both implicit and explicit, of Kleinian work, and suggested some connections between these and the social preoccupations of the post-war welfare state in Britain. The purpose was partly to explore these connections as matters of fact and explanation, but also to establish the positive values of these psychoanalytic ideas for a democratic socialist vision. These papers, it is clear now, were already historical in their reference when they were written, since the age of Thatcher had begun, and the dismantling of the post-war consensus and settlement of the welfare state was in its first stages. However, in 1981 it seemed reasonable to hope otherwise, for an early resumption of the admittedly uneven progress towards full social citizenship which had been initiated during the Second World War. It was not obvious at the time that the social programme to which one's arguments sought to relate psychoanalytic practice, especially in the public health field, had stopped in its tracks, or still worse, been put into reverse.

Now, in the late 1980s, the radical change in political climate is unmistakable. It is hardly possible at this point to see the evolution of welfare institutions supportive of personal development as a thriving cause, or to see ideas of caring and inclusive social membership as particularly central to mainstream British society's view of itself. Integrative conceptions of British society, binding both within and to some degree between social classes, have for the time being at least disintegrated, first under the pressure of intensified social conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s, as different class and social movements mobilized, and evoked counter-mobilizations from the right, and then in a pervasive process of privatization and atomization of social interests. British society has become both more pluralistic, in the diversity of social identities which have emerged, and also more individualistic, as the Thatcherites have rewarded and legitimized the priority of self-interest over ideas of the social good which they now define as coercive, but which at an earlier moment seemed to be widely consensual.

Significant changes are also taking place on the plane of intellectual and cultural life. I have in mind less the revival of militant neo-conservative ideologies (which are often similar in their *form* of thinking and practice to the ideologies of the left, even if opposite in values and content) than the disintegration of established systems of theory and belief. On one view (which has interesting echoes of Nietzsche) we live on after the death of ideology, in a period of 'post-Marxism', 'post-modernism', 'post-structuralism', post-whatever. Unfortunately the 'end of ideology', when it came, didn't usher in an era of consensual, ethically based harmony, as Daniel Bell and liberal functionalists like him had hoped, but instead one of anomic disintegration, self-seeking, and confusion. The links between the art and ideas of post-modernism, and the economic and social infrastructure of post-industrialism or post-Fordism have been explored in interesting ways by a number of writers.² What I want to do in this article is to characterize the development of a 'post-Kleinian' body of psychoanalytic ideas, suggest some affinities this shares with the wider post-modernist climate of thought, and to raise some questions about its potential political and cultural linkages, these being still to a degree undetermined and dependent on choices yet to be made.

I. The Kleinian Paradigm and its Political Affinities

In order to clarify what is distinctive about the concerns of 'post-Kleinian' psychoanalysis, it may be helpful to give a brief sketch of the main themes of classical Kleinian ideas, and their social affinities, following the

¹ See, for example, 'A Socialist Consideration of Kleinian Psychoanalysis', *NLR* 131, January-February 1982; 'Relational Preconditions of Socialism' (with Margaret Rustin), in Barry Richards, ed., *Capitalism and Infancy*, Free Association Books, 1982; 'Psychoanalysis and Social Justice', *Free Associations*, Pilot Issue, 1984.

² E.g., Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *NLR* 146, July-August 1984; Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism*, ch. 9, London 1987; Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, Verso, London 1987; David Harvey, 'Flexible Accumulation through Urbanization: Reflections on "Post-Modernism" in the American City', *Antipode* 19/3, 1987.

accounts attempted in earlier work.³ I argued in 'A Socialist Consideration of Kleinian Psychoanalysis' that Melanie Klein's investigations of the mental states of infancy gave rise to an intensely *social* view of the origins of the self. The baby, she saw, depended on mother (or other primary caretaker) not only for its physical well-being, or even its sense of emotional comfort, but also for the development of its sense of identity and its powers of mental functioning. Klein saw the infant's fragmented, diffused, and often violent states of mind and feeling becoming integrated into a coherent awareness of self and others only through intimate relationship with parenting adults. Unconscious communication links mother and infant in a symbiotic unit, in the early stages of life, without which the infant is no more psychologically viable than he or she is physically viable if abandoned when young. This emphasis on infantile relatedness and dependency, especially in the earliest months of life, and in the primary relationship with the mother, leads to a perspective on human nature distinct from the robust individualism of Freud, though a development of his own discoveries.

There is some consistency between this theory of infantile development, and Bowlby's attachment theory, which stressed the dependence of infants on primary maternal care, and argued that emotional and mental capacities were damaged by its absence. Bowlby grounded his theory on biological considerations of species survival, and made relevant use of ethological evidence from the behaviour of primates. There is, however, an important difference between these theories. Attachment theory is environmentalist in its main emphasis, holding (like the early Freud on infantile sexual experience) that it is actual contact with parents which makes possible (or its absence impossible) normal development. Separations and interruptions of care, and their consequences for bonding, are therefore of most account, and the most important modes of intervention are designed to prevent such breakdowns. For the child analysts, these infant-parent transactions take place in unconscious phantasy as well as in external practice. There is an inner-world dimension of development, not necessarily directly corresponding to the intentions or external manifestations of parental care. Because of the role of innate disposition in infants and parents, and the importance of phantasy in the development of an internal world and the perceptions and expectations it shapes, outcomes of parental care are both less predictable and more alterable from the perspective of child analysts than from that of attachment theorists. The development of child analysis, especially in its attempts to treat extreme cases of developmental failure such as autism or schizophrenia in children, arises from its view of the importance of these unconscious dimensions. Bowlby and his colleagues have been more sceptical than the Kleinians about the effectiveness of analytic therapeutic methods, once emotional damage has been done.

A second characteristic of Kleinian analysis was its emphasis on the ethical. Kleinian theory makes the development of moral capacities in the infant a criterion of normal personality development. Moral feelings are

³ For introductions to Klein's work see J. Mitchell, ed., *The Selected Melanie Klein*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1986; H. Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, London 1964.

held to be innate, arising from the primary intensity of feelings of both love and hate for the object. The infant recognizes that the kinds of well-being and pain that it experiences are also experienced by the mother, and can be given to or withheld from her by its own agency. The discrimination between good and bad in this primary relationship, and the recognition of responsibility for these states, are the roots of moral discriminations of a more general kind. The Kleinian model in which development takes place from paranoid-schizoid to depressive positions (as recurring constellations of feeling, not merely as chronological phases) includes moral capacities in the definition of these positions. This is pictured as a transition from states dominated by persecutory, split-off, projected bad feelings (lodged in the phantasied other through projective identification) to the recognition of the vulnerability of the loved object, and a state of mind where there is capacity to bear pain and loss within the self. The ideas of gratitude and reparation held to emerge with the depressive position are terms which belong to a complex ethical language, as well as to psychological description. Kleinian analysis in these ways provided a resource for enriching a somewhat depleted discourse of English moral philosophy, though not one which has been widely taken up.⁴

A third aspect of Kleinian thinking which I shall argue had significant social affinities was its teleological dimension. There is inherent in Kleinian theory, the idea of a 'normal' pathway of development, given both explanatory and evaluative significance. The 'depressive position' defined a state of affairs that was normative, what one should want for human beings, which was held in some way to correspond to the potential of human nature. This theory offers a complex account of the developmental needs of the moral individual. From its presuppositions one could point out favourable and unfavourable conditions for such development, and practices and institutions (e.g. kinds of child-care, therapeutic and remedial intervention, understanding and support for families) which might further these. It seemed reasonable to link this normative account of the development of the individual to a 'progressive' view of social development, in which society or governments gave greater priority to such developmental goals and their desired moral outcomes.

One central theme of Kleinian theory was, however, contrary to the meliorist climate of post-war Britain, and was difficult to assimilate into its social thought. This was its emphasis on destructiveness and aggression—the concept of an innate 'death instinct' which was so important in the conflict between the Kleinians and the two other rival groups in the British Psychoanalytic Society in the 1940s. The Middle Group, or Independents, who mostly rejected this negative emphasis in Klein's theory, remained closer to the prevailing temper of British liberal thought, being less committed to theoretical consistency and less intransigent in outlook than the Kleinians. This darker current in Klein's thought contributed in large measure to its remaining a minority, oppositional tendency, marginal to British intellectual life, though it nevertheless proved capable, within its own field, of a long period of creative development. Considering the experience of war and mass murder of the period, it is odd that

⁴ But for a text which does attempt this investigation, see Richard Wollheim, *The Thread of Life*, Cambridge 1984.

the Kleinian view of innate human potential should have been regarded as extreme and alien. It seems to relate to this experience of surrounding catastrophe in the same way that Freud's own pessimistic writings did to the events of the First World War, though for the most part (in Klein's own work at least) without explicit reference to this public context. It is not, I think, coincidental that Kleinian analysts have subsequently been amongst those most prominent in the campaign among British psychoanalysts against nuclear war, given the central place of unconscious destructiveness in their theory, and the imperative need to bring this within the field of conscious understanding.

These psychoanalytic ideas connected to several of the central preoccupations of social thought in post-war Britain. The ethical cast of Kleinian thinking paralleled a moral emphasis in social-democratic political thought, evident for example in Titmuss's forceful contrast of altruism with individualism and sectional class interests. The idea of human nature and its potentials, as a moral benchmark against which social progress could be measured, figured also in the most vigorous area of post-war cultural criticism, notably in that of Leavis and his circle. Leavis defined the main tradition of English literature as a field of moral enquiry and reflection, generative of values higher than those of utility and business ('Benthamite-utilitarian civilization'). The Kleinian, or more broadly the object-relations theory of development, could be seen as the systematic theory of human nature and its potential emotional and moral capacities that Leavisism lacked. In the late 1950s, with the emergence of the new left, the idea of human potentiality was given a socialist and indeed Marxist form, with the rediscovery of Marx's early manuscripts and the revival of humanist Marxism. There was some continuity between a liberal idea of fulfilment through self-expression, and a socialist view of a democratic culture, a development which Raymond Williams's work did most to make possible. A teleological vision was the common background assumption of a wide variety of more-or-less humanist theories, from the Kleinian view of individual development, to both liberal and socialist ideas of social improvement. Liberal, social democratic, and neo-Marxist theories of progress in each case incorporated ideas of individual self-expression into their moral foundation, at least until structuralist and post-structuralist critiques put all this implicit or explicit liberal humanism in question. Education and the personal social services became fields in which psychoanalytically informed conceptions of individual development achieved a limited practical influence. This occurred, for example, in the recognition of the emotional needs of children in hospital, in critiques of impersonal institutional care, in the growth of school counselling, and in the development of psychotherapeutic treatment for children and families.

A 'Facilitating Environment'

The organicism of Kleinian and other object-relations thinking is another point of affinity with post-war social concerns. The idea of the integration of the self in what Winnicott termed a 'facilitating environment' corresponded with a broader ideological concern for social reintegration, following the disorganization and disruption of war, and the fresh memories of class antagonism and polarization, clearly central to the pre-war crisis

and the onset of fascism. Bowlby's initial work was concerned with the ill-effects of evacuation on children, and led him to a broader concern with experiences of separation and loss. Titmuss's work was manifestly pre-occupied with the idea of an integrated social order, unified as a moral community. The figuring of the child as an emblem of hope was central to post-war progressivism, not only reflecting a demographic primacy but also expressing the hopes of an adult generation scarred by war, and wanting to build a different future for the next generation. In the 1960s it became possible to acknowledge more extreme and disturbing memories and experiences in symbolic terms, and Kleinian thinking (and psycho-analytic ideas more generally) became an occasional resource in attempts to encompass or recognize greater depths of destructiveness in art and literature. Whether readily absorbed into English cultural discourse or not, there is no doubt that Kleinian concerns with psychotic, paranoid, and suicidal states of mind connected with prominent themes in post-war culture, once writers began to explore these. R.D. Laing's early works, *The Divided Self* and *The Self and Others*, were influential in introducing these Kleinian ideas to a wide audience.

Within Kleinian analytic practice, these background ethical and humanist conceptions were also evident. Classical Kleinian analysis not only used developmental concepts which had a central moral dimension, but sometimes applied them judgementally, invoking guilt and blame to the detriment of analytic understanding. The Kleinians were characterized by their possession of a strong background theory, by their commitment to strict analytic technique, and by membership of a strongly defined group, sectarian at least in respect of its liability to defection and split. Some Kleinians remained most committed to maintaining the standards and purity of psychoanalysis, accepting as a concomitant of this goal its necessary confinement within the marginal though elite institution of the British Psychoanalytical Society. Others developed a more proselytizing and socially committed conception of analytic practice and consultation, through institutions such as the Tavistock Clinic. But what was taken for granted in both circles was the commitment to a definite form of knowledge, its connection to central human values, and its demanding claims as a vocation. These qualities it shared with other secular but nevertheless transcendental humanisms of the period, including Leavisism and humanist Marxism. The distinctiveness and vulnerability of these moralized ways of looking at the world has only become fully evident as they have begun to be challenged by the outlooks of the 'post-philosophies'. While they are radically different in their content and their specific ontological and ethical claims, they turn out to be quite similar in the humanist certainty of their perspectives on human nature and purpose.

Liberal humanism, Marxism, even orthodox psychoanalysis, have in recent years come to be attacked, from within and without their own traditions, as absolutisms, for demanding improper 'guarantees' (of truth or virtue) in a world deemed to be one of contingency, relativity and pluralism.⁵ Even those like me committed to the defence of absolutist

⁵ For a critique of one influential version of 'post-Marxism', that of Laclau and Mouffe, see M.J. Rustin, 'Absolute Voluntarism', *New German Critique*, No. 42, Winter 1988, as well as recent debates between Norman Geras and these authors in *NLR*.

positions have to take account of these critiques and the new orders of phenomena they address. This change of cultural perspective has its reflections within the Kleinian analytic tradition too. It is now possible to characterize a 'post-Kleinian' psychoanalysis, and to explore its relationship to the current cultural climate.

II. Post-Kleinian Analysis

The central figure in the development of 'post-Kleinian' psychoanalysis was Wilfred Bion, though his work forms part of a broader evolution to which many other analysts have contributed.⁶ There has been no repudiation of Klein's ideas by these analysts, on the contrary a deep engagement with and development of them, parallel to Klein's own reading and re-working of Freud. Yet the effect has been to achieve a deep shift of interest and focus, identifying phenomena for investigation distinct from those which were central for Klein and her earlier followers.

The impetus for this development came primarily from the attempt to analyse patients with more extreme disturbances of mind than those previously thought amenable to analytic treatment. In the brilliant papers collected in *Second Thoughts* Bion describe how he tried to understand the mental states of psychotic patients who were either unable to communicate verbally during most of their analytic sessions, or whose communications seemed to represent states of hallucination or delusion. Bion was led to rely on the countertransference (analysis of the analyst's own state of mind as a possible register of unconscious communications from analysands) as a major analytic resource. But he also focused on the processes by which sensation and emotion became capable of symbolic representation, and what happened to the mind when they did not, or when the capacity to distinguish symbols (especially words) and their objects was not achieved. In these conditions, the intense passions and anxieties aroused in infancy by bodily sensations, desires, and terrors, would literally disintegrate the mind. The processes of thought which normally clarify boundaries between phenomena, and thus reduce the anxiety attached to them, could be experienced in these circumstances as threatening conjunctions. Bion understood that in extreme psychotic states, the process of thinking itself, the very idea of language, could be experienced as a mortal threat. Freud thought that (for patients deemed not too ill for analysis to be possible) particular infantile experiences and phantasies would be fraught with anxiety and subject to repression, while some generally rational thinking capacity could be used as the platform, so to speak, from which the irrational depths could be investigated. The function of analytic method was to uncover specifically repressed meanings (from dreams, dream associations, etc.) while assuming that analyst and analysand shared a linguistic medium which for the most part could be relied upon for this communication.

⁶ See especially, W.R. Bion, *Learning from Experience* (1962); *Attention and Interpretation* (1970), both Maresfield Reprints, 1984; *Second Thoughts*, Heinemann, 1967. An account of Bion's development is given by Donald Meltzer in *The Kleinian Development*, Part 3, Chunie Press, 1978. Elizabeth Spillius, ed., *Melanie Klein Today*, vols. 1 and 2, Institute of Psychoanalysis/Tavistock Publications, 1988, contains many valuable articles reflecting recent Kleinian developments.

This assumption was made by Klein also, for the most part. Though she extended analytic interest to mechanisms of denial, splitting, and projective identification which she thought of as more primitive processes, her analytic work with children nevertheless proceeded on the assumption that there was a rational as well as irrational (infantile) part of the analyst's mind, functioning well enough to sustain analytic dialogue. But for Bion, and those like him who have attempted to analyse schizophrenic and autistic patients, this assumption could no longer be made, since the absence of a capacity for ordinary mental function was the central issue. Attention shifted from what was supposed to be contained (in whatever repressed or distorted form) by the mental apparatus, to the properties of the container itself, to use two of Bion's most influential terms.

This implicit paradigm shift within the Kleinian tradition was not achieved without psychoanalysts being willing to expose themselves to an experience of extreme disturbance and disorientation. This is especially clear in Bion's description of his work with psychotic patients, but it is also reported in the writings of other contemporary analysts of such extreme states of mind, such as Frances Tustin (whose work is with autistic children), Herbert Rosenfeld (the other major Kleinian writer on psychotic states) and Donald Meltzer (who has been one of the main interpreters of Bion's ideas).⁷ Bion came to feel that in order to make any progress with analysis of psychotic disturbance, it was necessary to empty the mind of theoretical preconceptions, which became in these conditions merely defences against what had to be experienced in feeling before it could be thought about, known before it could be known about. Bion urged this technical requirement of a wholly receptive mind, working without preconceptions very graphically, when he called on analysts to empty their minds of memory and desire during analytic sessions, as a positive discipline. 'Memory and desire are "illuminations" that destroy the analyst's capacity for observation as a leakage of light into a camera might destroy the value of the film being exposed.'⁸

This ideal of total receptivity (which was compared to the aesthetic idea of 'negative capability') was received in part of the analytic community as a kind of renewal of the pure spirit of analysis, felt to have become somewhat routinized in the hands of some orthodox Kleinians. It is perhaps parallel in this respect to movements for internal renewal in modernism (for example, the phase of the 'new brutalism' in architecture), where a return to fundamentals was called for by a new generation against the institutional compromises of the elder generation.

Thus, there is a move in post-Kleinian analysis towards an extreme phenomenology. The here-and-now transactions of the analytic session itself are given an ontological priority over established theoretical models. It is as if post-Kleinian analysis makes a shift from the mode of 'normal

⁷ F. Tustin, *Autism and Childhood Psychosis*, Hogarth, 1972; *Autistic States in Children*, Routledge, 1981; *Autistic Barriers in Neurotic Patients*, Karnac, 1986; H. Rosenfeld, *Psychotic States* (1965), Maresfield Reprints, 1982; *Impasse and Interpretation*, Tavistock, 1987; D. Meltzer, *Several States of Mind*, 1973; *Dream Life*, 1984; *Studies in Extended Metapsychology*, 1986; Meltzer et al., *Explorations in Autism*, 1975 (all Clunie Press).

⁸ *Attention and Interpretation*, ch. 6, but see also chs 3-5.

science'—often fairly standard applications of established conceptions and techniques to recognizable conditions—to a 'revolutionary' mode, in which every theoretical belief, at least in principle, has to be suspended for the moment. It seems that even the theories and models held to be basically correct by analysts like Bion and Meltzer were found an obstacle, in actual analytic work, to thinking about psychotic patients whose communications were barely verbal and which had to be intuited largely through the counter-transference. The moment of discovering a meaning in a fleeting experience, of tentatively putting together the fragments of a language through which analyst and patient could talk, became the key task. These patients, it must be recalled, were extremely disturbed—the issue is not the usual repressions and misrepresentations of self and others found in neurotic symptoms, but the absence in such patients of almost any undisturbed communicative capacity.

Similar experiences arose in an equally dramatic way in therapeutic work with schizophrenic and autistic children. The problem was to find a language, sometimes in relationship with a virtually mute child, or with a child whose language seemed completely deluded. The templates of established theories and procedures had to be to some degree held in suspension to achieve this. Furthermore, establishing some capacity for thinking in the patient—that is, helping the child in some way to bear and deal with the overwhelming or terrifying feelings which *prevented* thinking—clearly had a priority, if anything was to happen, over worries about where the patient was located in relation to the developmental stages and implicit norms defined by Klein. These were patients whose development had hardly started, or which had been so arrested that the achievement of 'emotional maturity' in Kleinian terms was not going to become an issue until years of psychotherapy had taken place, if ever.

Process and Product

In the context of this work, priority came to be given to the process of making sense of chaotic mental and emotional phenomena, over its product in or reference to ordered theories and models. Kleinian theory had brilliantly postulated a theory of development, identifying in temporal and, more important, teleological order, a set of psychic and relational capacities on which individual development could be mapped. This could also be seen as a developmental journey which individuals could be helped, through psychotherapy, to undertake. In the post-Kleinian work discussed here, the idea of a 'known model' is pushed somewhat into the background, though not entirely repudiated. Whereas the main task of analytic observation in the earlier work was one of recognition—identifying a familiar or precedented pattern in new particulars (specific analytic sessions or cases)—the emphasis in the more recent work is on the process of discovery of patterns which may have no precedent, and which diverge from established models. Process has priority over product, the making of sense over the normative or standard sense which is supposed to be made.

One can identify other dimensions of this paradigm shift. In thinking about methodology, we find a shift (described and defended in Meltzer's account of the Kleinian tradition) from earlier aspirations to scientificity

and a causal model of the psyche, first to a hermeneutic view of psychoanalysis, as concerned with meanings, and then on to the properly phenomenological concern with the process of meaning-construction or coming-into-being.⁹ The view of psychoanalysis as an orderly evolution of ideas (the normal science model) is disturbed by the discontinuist ideas of 'catastrophic change', enunciated by Bion and followed also by Meltzer. Catastrophic change, tolerance of extreme disorder in order to discover new orders of truth, is deemed to be the source of real creativity. The idea of catastrophic change—creativity which breaks the boundaries of established thinking—is seen as the generative source of authentic development. This leads to a different and more negative valuation of institutions dedicated to the reproduction and propagation of psychoanalysis than that which followed from the 'normal science' paradigm (once the early battles over Kleinian ideas had been fought to a standstill). The ordered compromises and hierarchies of the Institute for Psychoanalysis were implicitly or explicitly attacked by both Bion and Meltzer, in their different ways. The exemplary figure of the prophet whose creativity cannot be tolerated by any institution, in Bion's work, implies a deep hostility to what are regarded as the stultifying effects of any routinized institutional practice. ('An easily seen example of this is the group's promotion of the individual to a position in the Establishment where his energies are deflected from his creative-destructive role and absorbed in administrative functions. His epitaph might be "he was loaded with honours and sank without a trace".'¹⁰) Bion's valuation of the experience of knowing—as a process of containment through thought of ineffable experience—amounts to almost a mystical valuation of contemplation as the highest human experience.

The stretching of the frontiers of analytic knowledge to encompass very early, extreme and primitive states unavoidably leads to some dismantlement of the idea of the individual as a coherent mental entity. Bion describes thought as transcending the thinker, as an immersion in or glimpse of some order of being beyond individuality. Conversely, anti-thought, 'attacks on linking', and what Bion and Meltzer term *lies*, come to be seen as the major enemies of the good, more insidious than destructive hate. Meltzer speculates on the state of mind of the unborn baby in the womb, and suggests that human beings have an innate sense of beauty, evoked by the perfection of the breast as it is experienced by the infant, and by the discovery of the other wondrous features of the world as it makes itself known. Bion's work was built on a development of Klein's notion of an epistemophilic instinct, an innate appetite for knowledge; he models his view of consciousness on the alimentary process, seeing it as a process of conversion or transformation of materials into an ordered symbolic form. Somatic expression through bodily illness or symptom is seen as an alternative mode of discharge for anxieties where the thinking apparatus has itself been damaged by internal attack.¹¹ Meltzer's so-far underdeveloped concept of the aesthetic might be understood to refer to

⁹ These issues are explored further in M.J. Rustin, 'Psychoanalysis, Philosophical Realism, and the New Sociology of Science', *Free Associations* 9, 1987.

¹⁰ *Attention and Interpretation*, p. 78.

¹¹ Bion's insights concerning the somatic expression of unbearable states of feeling have been further developed in Joyce McDougall's *Theories of the Mind. Illusion and Truth on the Psychoanalytic Stage*, Free Association Books, 1986.

the elemental pleasure obtained from recognition of order, from the containment of experience in symbolic form. (This may also make possible a psychoanalytic account of the aesthetic functions of the mind described by Kant in the *Critique of Judgement*.)

The main Kleinian contribution to the theory of art stressed its functions of integration and reparation.²² The symbolizations of art were deemed to be powerful in proportion to the conflicts which they were able to resolve, and the degree to which they were able to give external representation to objects therefore saved or restored from the ravages of internal attack. The achievements of art were thus closely linked to the attainment of the depressive position, and thus with a morally informed vision of development. The post-Kleinian theory of art is as yet less developed, but the indications are that its concerns are less with conflict between love and hate than with the surmounting of disintegration and catastrophe. Truth, not love, becomes the primary issue, and the greatest artists are those with the capacity to withstand internal threats to mental function, and to create new symbolic order from 'catastrophic change'.

One might summarize this paradigm shift in the following table, at risk of considerable over-simplification.

<i>dimension</i>	<i>Kleinian</i>	<i>Post-Kleinian</i>
conception of theory	realist	phenomenological
model of development	teleological, from paranoid-schizoid to depressive position	discontinuous catastrophic change
implied ethics	reparative morality	truth as prime goal
implied aesthetics	reparation through art	generative of order
analytic technique	primary concern with transference interpretations	increased attention to counter-transference
view of organization	hierarchical/institutionalized	anti-organizational charismatic

III. The Cultural Affinities

This development of analytic thought in Britain has some unexpected affinities with 'post-modernism' as a broader cultural tendency. What in particular links current developments in psychoanalysis with the post-modern climate is the questioning of central paradigms of 'modernist' thinking, of which psychoanalysis is a prototypical instance. Post-Kleinian analysis reflects this context of fragmentation, but in providing a powerful means of analysing fragmented states of mind in their most

²² See Hanna Segal, 'A Psychoanalytic Approach to Aesthetics' (1952), reprinted in *The Work of Hanna Segal*, Free Association Books/Maresfield Library, 1986. For Meltzer's recent views see D. Meltzer and M. Harris Williams, *The Approaches of Beauty*, Clunie Press, 1988.

extreme and private form it may also point to means of overcoming this condition.

Classic modernism presupposed hitherto unrecognized transcendental truths to which new symbolic forms might give access. These domains of truth were sometimes rationalist in conception—for example, the commitment of modernists in architecture to ideas of rational form and function. In other domains (for example, modernist writing), hitherto unrecognized domains of the irrational were posited, which called for new literary techniques. While the methods of Lawrence or Woolf were not 'realist' in the earlier social-realist sense, these writers were undoubtedly committed to an idea of external reference, even though their new referents were hitherto unrepresented states of feeling or consciousness. Freud was a 'modern' in this sense, committed to the investigation of a distinctive order of truth, as was Klein. So, at an earlier historical moment, was Marx. Modernism—one can include the constitution of the classical sociology of Simmel, Durkheim and Weber, and the structural linguistics of Saussure—posited new domains of reality and new kinds of causal determination. While these undermined and supplanted the conventional assumptions of the dominant culture, they did so in the name not of indeterminacy, relativism, or subjectivity, but of new orders of transcendental truth. Even the rediscovery or reinvention of tradition (by T.S. Eliot, for instance) was presented as a transcendental truth, conceived as a renewed relationship to the religious and cultural meanings of the past. Modernism announced new 'deep structures' which determined or situated the existing surfaces of culture. Advocates of modernism proclaimed a privileged access to new forms of knowledge and experience, variably grounding these in the rationalities of class, science, the expertise of professionals, or the intuitive capacities of artists. They proposed evolutionary schema or 'meta-narratives' to explain the superiority of the 'modern' over the pre-existing, and its inexorable historical advance. It is these claims to *truth* which 'post-modernism' has repudiated in its various ways, as indefensible forms of intellectual and cultural closure.

'Post-modern' thought has set out to undermine all such transcendental certainties, from theories of history (such as Marxism) to normative theories of the subject, in liberal humanism. Normative concepts—ideals—formerly thought of as critical means of emancipation, to be set against the given, are now viewed as themselves forms of closure. The process of cognitive and cultural production takes precedence over its product—the constitution of identities or texts over the substantive identities and states of reality that they represent. Radical politics is defined as the construction of collective identities by the self-definition of actors, not as a disclosure of communities of interest or value which are objectively given. The micro-sociology of the day describes how the world is constructed, moment by moment, from scripts used as rhetorical resources to rationalize interests, rather than viewed as the constituting meanings of social groups. Macro-sociology seeks a synthesis of all known perspectives, a sociology to end sociology, a map of maps so inclusive and reflexive as to incorporate and annul critique itself.

This situation is in part the cultural concomitant of consumer society, a

way of rationalizing (and celebrating) the experience of an overload of meanings, cut off from their integral location in historical time and social space. As a free play of differences impacts on the citizen, unavoidably relativizing the values, meanings, procedures and skills learned in a particular place, what could be more tempting than to make a virtue of the capacity to negotiate disorder, and even enjoy it? Identity is both fragmented by the multiplicity of choices, and also depleted in its sense of depth by discontinuities, by the seemingly untenable and provincial quality of any definite cultural affiliation. Fragmentation thus becomes a state of authenticity, discontinuity the means by which authentic desire can make itself known in the interstices, between the lines of necessarily repressive scripts. Lacanian psychoanalysis has been one of the major legitimations of this outlook, defining language and culture as inherently agents of repression, advancing a metaphysic of unavoidable contradiction between an authentic self banished to the unconscious, and the symbolic forms which violate this even as they are necessary to give it existence. As the utopian hopes of the late 1960s were unfulfilled, so the idea of authentic possibility was fragmented into textual traces, or repressed into an inner realm of the unknowable. The 'impossible' (the inevitable mis-match of desire and language) becomes elevated into a general view of the human condition.

Some parallels can be drawn between these 'post-modernist' preoccupations and ways of thinking, and the evolution of post-Kleinian ideas. The post-Kleinians have moved their attention away from the posited metaphysical structures of Freud (his topographical model of the psyche) and adopted instead a phenomenological approach to the mind. They have become interested in the forms of language and expression—indeed the very possibility of these—as alternative registers or means of processing primitive sensations and feelings. Bion's idea of 'transformations' refers to the migration of meanings across various levels of mental process, and through various means of interpersonal communication. It would be a further step (though one that Bion and the post-Kleinians do not take) to abandon the framework of posited mental structures and a constituted internal world altogether, and to attend only to the transformations of meanings at their surface. This would turn analysis into an infinite regress, and would from a post-Kleinian point of view be near to entering a world of madness. A constituted world of internal objects is the precondition of sanity, and to abolish deep emotional structure is to abolish the possibility of reason.

There is an unexpected affinity also between the post-Kleinian commitment to the authenticity of the analytic process and the priority given to exposure to the experience of the unconscious, and the Lacanian hostility to the routinization of psychoanalysis. Both Bion and Lacan are capable of writing in gnomic ways. In each case, the pressure to do this arises in part from a sense of the inexpressibility of the phenomena of the consulting room, and the need to expose oneself to the disturbing reality of this—to the experience of *not knowing*. Each seeks, from its very distinct theoretical position, a renewal of the primary task of psychoanalysis, attention to its distinctive levels of phenomena (or in Bion's terms vertices), against the grain of superficial theorizing. It seems to me a strength of post-Kleinian work, in contrast to the orthodox Freudian limitations of

Lacanianism, that it has also succeeded in extending its theoretical system to encompass the new depths of phenomena that it disclosed. The Lacanians, by contrast, have been constrained (by their combination of Freudian orthodoxy and post-structural linguistics) to regard the primitive unconscious mainly as a negative anti-space, what can ~~not~~ be known fully through the resources of language.

The move from ethical to aesthetic concerns, from the dynamics of love and hate to interest in how feelings are processed as thoughts, or in other ways, also has its parallels in post-modern thinking. The problem from the post-structuralist point of view with ethical judgements is that they depend on criteria of some kind, grounded in a priori or absolute ideas. Like the idea of the humanist subject, they are deemed to be inherently ideological, conceptual vehicles of power, not the rational principles or grounds of moral sense from which power relations can be judged. The concept of pleasure or *jouissance* is more an aesthetic than a moral concept, signifying moments of authenticity and of escape, glimpses of the imaginary (and moments of discharge of its affects) in the interstices of the symbolic.

The Cultural Context

There seem therefore to be some interesting parallels between recent developments of post-Kleinian analysis, and wider post-modernist/post-structuralist cultural tendencies. Even though these conjunctions are by no means simple or symmetrical, and even though there has been little or no direct dialogue between these perspectives, each seems to represent a move away from the ethical, humanist, and progressivist certainties of the earlier post-war period. Why should this be? In particular, how did the clinically preoccupied and professionally secluded world of Kleinian psychoanalysis come to respond to these broader changes in the cultural and social climate?

Of course, there have never existed simple connections between broad visions of social improvement and the world-view of psychoanalysis. (Avant-garde psychoanalytic work, first by Klein and then by Bion, anticipated in each case by some years the cultural context with which it was subsequently to seem most consonant). The social agenda implicit in the Kleinian perspective on human development was never of primary interest to a majority of analysts, whose main concern remained the work of psychoanalysis itself. Even so, the crisis of the welfare state, from the late 1960s onwards, may have had its effects on analytic preoccupations, driving these further inwards into the individual essence of analytic work, and away from its institutional applications.

For example, the profession of social work, initially the most receptive to analytic ideas after the war, turned firmly against this tradition and against work with individuals generally, as separate sub-professions (like psychiatric social work and child care) and departments were amalgamated into a unified profession, training, and departmental structure (as Social Services Departments). In psychiatry, new developments in pharmacology became the dominant factor in the reorganization of mental health services. Whilst child and adolescent psychotherapy has succeeded

in establishing itself as a profession recognized within the National Health Service, analytic psychotherapy for adults has so far failed to do so. The main competing profession, clinical psychology, adopted behaviourist, cognitive and family therapy techniques as its dominant expertise, their aspirations to scientificity also serving to exclude analytic orientations. In education as in social services, large-scale comprehensive reorganization initially tended to set a managerial rather than a professional agenda, and the contesting of this in collectivist ways (in part to realize the egalitarian aims of comprehensive education in terms of class, gender and race) also left little space for the individual orientation of psychoanalytic ideas. (Relationship to the experiences of race and gender remains a politically sensitive issue for psychoanalysis.) The consensual space on which psychoanalytically oriented work with individuals in the public sector depended was eroded first by institutional reform and politicization, and then by Thatcherism.

The marginal position of psychoanalysis within British society has always, in truth, limited its impact on social institutions. Its relation to mainstream British life has been more like that of the fine arts, existing in a state of licensed toleration or opposition, only occasionally having some wider resonance with public concerns. But although psychoanalysis in Britain has been concerned with individual development, its dominant values have not been individualist in a mainly material sense. Whilst psychoanalysts in private have often been able to achieve a comfortable professional position (in part because of their restricted recruitment and numbers), the overall scale of opportunities has not been large, and has not provided a powerful incentive for entry into the profession by comparison with many fields of medical practice. The British Psychoanalytical Society has chosen throughout its history to function as a small enclave, even to this day only training just enough analysts each year to ensure its reproduction. The maintenance of pure analytic standards, an elite position vis-à-vis other psychotherapies, and a respected cultural position, have been the dominant goals, and there has been little or no attempt to 'market' analysis more widely and profitably. Parallel to this, as already stated, has been a commitment to extending the work of analysis within the national health and welfare systems, but to no great material advantage. The significant contrast is with the much larger-scale private proliferation of psychoanalysis in the United States, where there are many psychoanalytic institutes rather than the single national society in Britain.

The increasingly materialist climate of Thatcherism does not seem to have brought an avaricious response from the analytic world. The distinctive Kleinian insight into greed and envy and their interrelationships has an obvious critical purchase on a climate of values in which greed is encouraged and envy provoked. The post-Kleinian concern with the overriding value of truth, and corresponding focus on what one might term the moral pathologies of thought, such as lies and the positive hatred of reality, also have applications beyond the narrowly clinical. The negative passion of the Thatcherites towards enemies within and without, their projected envy and violence, and their frequent subordination of truth to interest, must set many psychoanalytic teeth on edge, given the analytic commitment to very different forms of communication between persons.

A particular object of Thatcherite envy is perhaps the capacity for thought: one sees this in the demagogic populism of the new Right, and in the anxiety about uncontrolled thought shown in relation to education, a malign component of the concern about 'standards'. It must be admitted, however, that psychoanalytic sensitivities are liable to be upset by any dogmatic political ideology, left or right, given analytic commitments to 'space for thinking' and intimate human communication. A psychoanalytic response is liable to be made to the emotional form as much as to the rational content of public communication.

The idea of the individual has several dimensions, as Abercrombie, Hill and Turner have usefully clarified in their recent *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*. They distinguish between *individualism* as the conception of 'economic man' (the dominant ideology of Thatcherism), *individuality* as a romantic expressive conception of the individual (the high cultural version of individual value, advanced against utilitarian ideas by J.S. Mill and a considerably literary and artistic tradition), and *individuation*, the bureaucratic categorization and surveillance of subjects, theorized most importantly by Foucault. Those who have seen psychotherapies of various sorts as new forms of 'soft' social control make use of this last definition. It is the idea of the individual as 'individuality'—that is to say, implying an expressive and 'self-realized' version of self—which has the strongest affinity with recent psychoanalytical thinking in Britain, and indeed with the psychoanalytic tradition as a whole. This core of romantic individualism has been further developed in the post-Kleinian tradition, which asserts the priority of 'inner space' and individual development both against the claims of politics and institutions (especially when these turn hostile), and against merely instrumental materialism. Psychoanalysis thus retains its affiliation to the world-view of the most artistically minded and humanist segment of the bourgeoisie, whose values have also been subjected to attack by the entrepreneurial ethos of Thatcherism.

New Directions

What has occurred is a re-emphasis in post-Kleinian thinking on pure psychoanalytic ideals and techniques. At a time when wider applications and proselytization of psychoanalysis seem to have become blocked, new ideas and techniques have evolved within the primary analytic setting, through work with hitherto untreatable kinds of patients. This choice to work with the apparently most intractable kinds of mental illness—psychosis, narcissistic states, and autism—may have been partially forced by the competitive developments of pharmacology, family therapy and other non-analytic treatments for more remediable conditions, but it has also reflected the inner logic of psychoanalytic thought, always most concerned with the infantile origins of adult states of mind. The inevitable imperfections and compromises of public service psychotherapy, in both practice and training, are put up with by many because of the urgency of the needs that this practice is designed to meet. Progress in the development of analytic psychotherapy supported by the National Health Service and by some local councils has in fact continued to be made in this period. But to some, an unfavourable climate induces a different response: public institutions themselves come to seem intolerable as settings, and private space for analytic work is valued more. This is a tension inherent in

psychoanalytic work. Donald Meltzer has argued for the priority of private, intimate relationships over all other kinds of social relation, in terms of their consequences for emotional growth and learning. It is a natural and precedented response of those committed to versions of expressive culture to retreat to the purest locations of the cultural, faced with the pressures of an aggressive and cynical materialism. The semi-mystical preoccupations of Bion's later writing, and the idealization of artistic genius among some of his followers, arise from this commitment to intrinsic analytic ends. Both Bion and Meltzer were notably hostile at different times in their careers even to the professional institutions of psychoanalysis, holding them to be inimical to creative work. The positive claims made for the aesthetic sense, as a hitherto neglected dimension of human experience, which emerged from the Kleinian and post-Kleinian interest in symbol formation, may seem to generalize less readily to society at large than do ideas of ethical responsibility, even if the sense of beauty is held in principle to be innate to all human beings, and is inferred in the first place from the observation of normal infants. However, this analytic purism, and its emphasis on authentic individual experience, also represents a form of distance from, and implicit protest against, the dominant climate of material individualism; it is not a conformist adaptation to it. An analogy might be drawn with Adorno's view of high art as a domain of negation of the given, and thus of alternative possibility.

The post-Kleinian development has some features which link it with a wider climate of post-modernism, sceptical of previous absolutist claims of many kinds. More important, however, are the continuities that remain between post-Kleinian analysis and the earlier Kleinian tradition. These continuities are insisted on by the major analysts of the later generation, who believe themselves to be a development of and not a break in the earlier tradition. This contrasts with the emergence of a 'post-Marxism', which in some forms has repudiated many fundamental propositions of the Marxist paradigm. For all its interest in the experience of discontinuity, and its commitment to what one might describe (by analogy with post-Marxism) as a psychoanalytic experience 'without guarantees', the post-Kleinians have not rejected their own heritage in Freud's and Klein's work, and continue to depend on its foundations. This has a bearing on the continued potential of post-Kleinian analysis as a social vision.

At a theoretical level, the post-Kleinian attention to the conditions of possibility of mental function aims to extend the Kleinian theory of the inner world, not to impose a closure or a priori limit upon its understanding. The purpose of post-Kleinian theory is to integrate the frameworks of Freud (models of libidinal energy, topographical structures) and Klein (internal objects, mechanisms of splitting and projective identification, a dualism of instincts) with Bion's insights into the modes of mental functioning. What Bion and other post-Kleinians have done (the analogy of the post-modernism debate in architecture might suggest 'late-Kleinians' as a more accurate term) is to explore the mental processes whereby love and hate, good and bad objects, are internalized in the mind. Where Freud dwelt on the objects of these feelings, and their bodily location, and Klein on the introjection of these as 'internal objects', Bion and others explored their transformations into thoughts, bodily sensations,

projections into others, the proto-mental stages prior to the constitution of a stable self.

Whilst these discoveries were made in the course of work by Bion, Rosenfeld, Meltzer and others with psychotically ill patients, they have nevertheless informed and inflected all analytic work in the Kleinian tradition, and beyond. The ideas of projective identification and containment have proved fertile in analytic work with many kinds of patient, as has attention to the range of verbal and non-verbal communications studied initially among non-verbal patients. Just as Klein's work made it possible to 'look for the infant' (or infantile part of the self) in child patients who were chronologically and in their normal behaviour well beyond infancy, so these later researches into psychotic parts of the self turn out to have application to many patients who are, in general terms, far from psychotic. As Freud's work established the normality of 'infantile sexuality', so later work in the psychoanalytic tradition has brought to visibility the traces and residues of even earlier mental states, and their continued influence on child and adult states of mind. Each development of analytic understanding in this tradition has illuminated and added to earlier models of understanding, absorbing them into a more comprehensive theory of development and mental function.

This later work has not severed links with the earlier interest of Kleinian analysis in pathology and healthy development in infancy. Later analysts in this tradition have developed Klein's understanding of the introjection by the infant of an internal image of the parents and their creative interaction. They have explored the states of frustration, jealousy, envy and pain inseparable from the infant's recognition of its dependence and relative weakness. Bion and other post-Kleinians investigated, in particular, what happens in and to the mind where these processes of internalization and integration are aborted or blocked. What happens when there is no containing boundary, no responsive adults to take in and share with the infant the intense feelings and sensations of its inner world? What defences are set up; how does the mind (conceived as a psyche-soma, experiencing pain through bodily sensation as well as in thought) work when it does not work? What mental work (conscious and unconscious) do caretakers have to do to enable the infant's mind to grow? What parallels does the activity of psychoanalysis have with these vital mental aspects of the work of parenting? This is not, in fact, a retreat from either the theoretical or practical understanding of human development (though it may have seemed heuristically or tactically necessary to treat it as such), but a remarkable extension of the scope of psychoanalytical theory, to encompass previously unthought states of mind.

A Symbolic Space

Nor need this be a retreat from the ethical or latent social programme of Kleinian psychoanalysis, and that of the British School more generally. The developmental agenda of Kleinian analysis is enlarged by the concerns of post-Kleinian analysis with processes of thought and symbolization. The idea of a contained symbolic space within which—and only within which—thought and development can take place links this idea of psychic process to a fuller conception of human development and its

preconditions. In earlier Kleinian work, mother–infant relationships constituted a kind of template from which broader kinds of social relationship could be conjectured. The early version laid greatest stress on the emotional responsiveness in parenting figures needed to sustain development. The idea that early relationships are also essential to the development of mental function extends this argument. They are the preconditions for the achievement of attachment to objects in imagined and symbolic terms, as well as in the intimate personal modes of love and gratitude. The experience of creating shared meaning, in mother–infant interactions, can thus also be seen as the model for a variety of later aesthetic and cognitive experiences, which depend on the experience of and response to emotions for their possibility. Winnicott's ideas concerning the relationship between creativity and play are also consistent with this view of human life as inherently concerned with symbolic forms.

To add cognitive and aesthetic capacities to the moral as specifications of human identity extends psychoanalytic thought, in ways which are both more intensely individual and more culturally differentiated than classical Kleinian ideas. The importance given to space for thinking, whether in institutions, families, or treatment settings, as a condition of development, follows the classical psychoanalytic valuing of conscious reflection as a means of liberation from compulsions of all kinds.

One might see the evolution of psychoanalysis in this tradition as a movement from the scientific (Freud's lifelong aspiration) to the ethical (Klein's idea of the depressive position whose defining criterion was capacity for concern for the other) to the aesthetic; that is, to the post-Kleinian valuation of understanding itself, a disinterested and wondering relation to the objects of experience. (These categories are those identified by Kant as the three distinct modes of human understanding, though the aesthetic ideas developed in *The Critique of Judgement* have been given less attention than the forms of scientific and ethical understanding.) Conceived as a social project, what this implies is the importance of symbolic capacities and their human and material resources, as the precondition for complex and challenging human lives. Even those committed to the defence of the institutions of the welfare state must surely see that its earlier values, defined in terms of caring, mutual dependency, and an idea of material sufficiency and improvement, no longer carry the appeal of a utopian social idea. Some enlargement of political vocabulary and vision is called for if socialists are to recover a capacity to define a new shape for the future. As advanced capitalist societies become more differentiated, and as more citizens gain the time, resources, and cultural space in which to define their own goals, the issue of *what* goals and meanings becomes central. To this extent the 'aesthetic' capacities and objects identified within post-Kleinian psychoanalysis acquire a potential political resonance, as an enlargement of, not a decadent substitute for, earlier ethical imperatives of altruism and mutual responsibility. The capacity for disinterested contemplation and admiration of objects outside the self (whether these be human creations, or aspects of nature) becomes a defining aspect of good lives, which are otherwise impoverished. The imperative to nurture the capacities for expression, task-solving, and engagement with the new, follows from this, as do the institutions, roles and skills which make this possible. Post-Kleinian psychoanalysis has contributed

an understanding of the roots of these capacities in infancy, and of the states of feeling and relationship which are their precondition. This is to define socialism as in part a cultural project. But doesn't any remotely appealing socialist vision of society now have to a large extent to have something to say about the sphere of culture, in its broadest terms? Even after thirty years of argument by the new left (and a lifetime's work by Raymond Williams, its greatest figure, to establish its foundations), this insight still remains disappointingly marginal to British politics.

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YUGOSLAVIA IN CRISIS

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The Communist world is being shaken today by a crisis of the political and socio-economic order whose precise nature differs with the response of the ruling parties to low productivity, shortages, discontent with bureaucratic privilege and waste, and popular longing for democratic rights and responsible government. But sclerotic ruling castes have stifled political life for so long that a more or less protracted transition period lies ahead as social forces fight over alternative political programmes. Yugoslavia is perhaps the clearest case in point. In the absence of socialist democracy and coherent political direction, laissez-faire economics will compound rather than remedy the fundamental problems of a post-Tito order beset by yawning regional and social inequalities. In this issue Branka Magaš focuses on the political crux of the crisis: the ascendance of a reactionary current in Serbia bidding for hegemony in the state as a whole. She shows how the rise of Milošević was accompanied by a state-sponsored campaign against the national rights of Yugoslavia's two million Albanians and against fledgling democratic stirrings throughout the country. Milošević's demagogic invocation of an 'anti-bureaucratic revolution' hides the most sustained onslaught against democracy in Yugoslavia since the war, whose effects are evident equally in Serbia's deadening monolithism, sustained by hysterical campaigns against opponents within and supposed enemies without, and in the weighty apparatus of repression forcing through an undemocratic constitution in Kosovo. Milošević has, however, encountered determined resistance, with the action of striking miners in Kosovo inspiring a new attempt to salvage the gains and reputation of the Yugoslav revolution. Any democratic regeneration of Yugoslavia's moribund socialist project will have to be achieved against the forces of national chauvinism and bureaucratic reaction nurtured within the party-state apparatus.

A mass of publicity in the last year has painted a uniformly rosy picture of the benefits that the single market will bring to the countries of the European Community after 1992. John Grähl and Paul Teague here take a more sober view of this process. Drawing on the analyses of the Regulation School, they argue that the 1992 programme will neither achieve the much-heralded aim of market integration nor ensure a stable recovery of the European productive economy. In a timely article, John Foster and

Charles Woolfson look at the experiences of two recent trade-union struggles in Scotland against the kind of transnational location strategies that the 1992 agenda is designed to facilitate: the Caterpillar occupation against plant closure in 1987, and the Ford manoeuvres at Dundee in 1987–88. As the international restructuring of capital gathers pace, it is becoming an ever more urgent task for the Left to meet the economic and political challenge at a similarly global level.

The institutional form of monarchy retains a surprising resilience in the modern world; Japan, the most successful capitalist state, still has a monarchy and so does Sweden, the world's most advanced social democratic experiment. But in any comparative view the British monarchy would earn special attention, if only because of its longevity, visibility and substantive political significance. In his coruscating polemic *The Enchanted Glass* Tom Nairn argues that Britain's cult of monarchy has supplied a crucial dimension of national identity, substituting for a democratic version of nationalism, contributing to mystification of social relations and supplying the basic framework of state legitimacy and power. In this issue Nairn's interrogation of the meaning of royalty is assessed by Anthony Arblaster and Victor Kiernan.

The Situationists were the most outrageous and the most enjoyable of the revolutionaries thrown into prominence in and by the sixties. They embodied their critique of the society of the spectacle and its left-wing dupes in brilliant epigrams—by May 1968 the slogans of this tiny avant-garde sect were being transmitted round the globe by breathless journalists seeking to convey the obscure longings revealed or released by Paris events. In a superb essay of critical recovery Peter Wollen charts the origins and aesthetics, the politics and art practice of the Situationist International, the revolutionary organization for cultural insurrectionists who despised culture and organization.

Finally, Merryn Williams reviews five recent books on the poetry and prose of the British Romantics, concentrating especially on feminist revaluations of Mary Shelley whose 'Frankenstein' remains a central literary achievement of that period.

Yugoslavia: The Spectre of Balkanization

No amount of anti-communist propaganda can obscure the fact that, since 1945, Yugoslavia has by and large been governed with the consent of its peoples. Equally, no amount of official piety can hide the fact that the League of Communists (LCY) has held power *only* by virtue of such confidence as it has commanded in the working class and the country's constituent nations. In February 1989, an unprecedented general strike of Albanian workers in the province of Kosovo confirmed this fact in the most dramatic way possible. Since the previous November, the consolidation of an openly and indeed triumphantly nationalist leadership in Serbia had led to the banning of all public meetings and demonstrations in Kosovo. The workers therefore retreated to their strongholds—the factories and mines—in a last-ditch attempt to defend national and democratic rights. A creeping general strike of industry was by February to culminate in a near complete shutdown of the province's economic life. The vanguard was constituted by the miners of the Trepča mining-industrial complex with its headquarters in Titova Mitro-

vica. A historic centre of working-class activity in Kosovo, formerly owned by British capital, Trepča supplied some of the earliest members of the pre-war Communist Party. Trepča miners were also among the first to join the wartime anti-fascist resistance. Now, in the third week of February 1989, 1,300 zinc and lead miners occupied their pits 3,300 feet underground, some of them on hunger strike, for eight days. Their demands were quite simple. They called for the resignation of three provincial officials imposed on them that month at the insistence of the Serbian party.¹ They asked that any constitutional limitation of Kosovo's autonomy—something which Belgrade had been pressing for—should be subject to democratic debate. Their third and most important demand was that the Albanian population should cease being treated as second-class citizens and a second-class nation in their own country. Not since the end of the war had Yugoslavia witnessed such a powerful workers' action in defence of key gains of the revolution. The issues were crystal clear, splitting the whole country into two well-defined camps and marking a watershed in its post-war history. Ranged on the side of the workers were all those forces, within and outside the League of Communists, who stand for a democratic Yugoslavia, based on full national equality. Confronting them were the forces of bureaucratic reaction, in alliance with national chauvinism, fully prepared to use violence against the working class.

The General Strike

The miners' determination and solidarity were awesome. They told journalists that they were determined to 'come out in coffins' unless their demands were met.² With them was Beqir Maliku, the mine's chief engineer, who—though old and by the sixth day gravely ill—refused to come up. The furnacemen, also on strike, spoke of committing collective suicide if Trepča was stormed. Below the ground, a strict guard was maintained over two tonnes of dynamite, to prevent any desperate action. The sick were sent up, suffering from respiratory and stomach problems (eyes, it seems, also suffered), to be treated by doctors and either returned immediately down or—if gravely ill—transferred to a hospital in Prishtina, the provincial capital. By the end of the strike, a hundred and eighty miners had ended there, some of them in intensive care.

Overground there was an equally tight discipline, maintained by miners wearing red armbands. Children and women waited patiently at the entrance of the pit, anxious for news. A Zagreb television crew went to visit one miner's family. They found a mother with nine children, occupying a self-made structure without windowpanes to protect them from the harsh February winds, huddled around a wood fire: despite the fact that Kosovo produces a substantial proportion of Yugoslavia's electricity, the family lived in darkness. In November 1987, the average wage in Trepča was \$55 a month, barely enough to keep a family from starvation. During the strike, moreover, many of the strikers refused their wages. This family had not even a radio to stay in touch with developments at the mine.

Elsewhere in the province, everything was at a standstill. Only the elec-

¹ One of these, the new party leader Rahman Morina, was also—tellingly—the province's police chief.

² *The Guardian*, London, 25 February 1989

tricity workers were press-ganged back to work. Students and school-children were also on strike. Even privately owned shops had their doors firmly shut. The markets were empty. Yet there was no organizing committee to direct the course of events, to collect and centralize the demands, to speak on behalf of the general strike. Despite this, the people spoke with one voice, demanding national justice and democracy.

The first to send a message of support were the miners of Slovenia. The Yugoslav party leadership, meanwhile, split on how to proceed. The Slovenian party supported an appeal by the republic's Socialist Alliance that Albanian human and national rights should be respected. A similar statement was issued by the Croatian Trade Union Alliance, and the Croatian party soon followed suit. The Serbian party, on the other hand, was set against all compromise, and could count on the support of party organizations in Vojvodina, Montenegro and Macedonia. The Bosnian party maintained a prudent silence. The collective state presidency, for its part, talked of using 'all constitutional means at our disposal' to secure law and order in the province: by the time the strike reached its high point, fresh paramilitary forces had been sent in and armoured personnel carriers appeared on the outskirts of the main towns, followed by tanks and low-flying jet fighters. One might have been back in 1981, when (following mass demonstrations demanding republican status for Kosovo, which the Federal authorities dubbed an attempt at 'counter-revolution') the province was placed under a state of emergency, then an unprecedented measure in post-war Yugoslavia.³

The weakness of the Federal party leadership was most starkly exposed by its handling of the Kosovo strike and its aftermath. On 28 February the miners appeared to have won, with the resignation of the three hated officials. They left the pits (though the strike continued elsewhere). The following day, however, under the pressure of a party-led nationalist mass mobilization in Belgrade, their resignations were 'suspended'. By this time, it was clear that the stakes were much higher than the fate of the three men, and involved the survival of democratic gains in Yugoslavia as a whole. Under the pressure of Serbian hardliners, the LCY presidency, meeting that day, not only reaffirmed its support for the constitutional changes sought by Serbia, but also called for a ban on all new political organizations in the country. Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian party boss, promised the assembled populace 'in the name of Serbia' that the organizers of the general strike would be arrested and punished. The first arrests were made on 2 March, and on 5 March it was announced that hundreds of workers faced criminal charges, as did even shopkeepers who had closed in sympathy with the strike. Kosovo is already under *de-facto* military rule. At the same time Slovenia, where the process of democratization has gone furthest, is being singled out as an object of particular hatred. What is to guarantee that the practice of constitutional changes made under military duress will not be extended to the rest of the country?

'The situation is growing worse by the day and the full responsibility for

³ For an extensive discussion of these events, and of their historical background, see Michele Lee, 'Kosovo between Yugoslavia and Albania', *New Left Review* 140, July-August 1983.

it rests with the League of Communists which—instead of offering new ideas and initiatives—has become the main brake on all positive change. The complete lack of perspective in our society prevents my continuing my membership, since I do not believe that the League of Communists is capable of taking our society out of the crisis in which it finds itself. We can no longer speak of it as the vanguard', wrote a Croat Communist recently in his letter of resignation.⁴

'The Central Committee of the League of Communists has reached the bottom line of its incompetence and powerlessness, and if it had had any moral dignity it would simply have dissolved itself, transferring its power to a parliament', commented the most influential Croatian weekly, after the CC plenum in January–February 1989.⁵ And three weeks later, during the miners' underground strike: 'The leadership's indifference to the miners' plight has finally cost socialist government the last remnants of its already badly dented class legitimacy.'⁶

For his part, Milan Kučan, the Slovene party leader, has written: 'The key question today is: what kind of Yugoslavia? A Yugoslavia that was not socialist and democratic would not be possible.'⁷ At the January–February plenum he declared: 'What is happening in the country today, and especially within the League of Communists, is simply the disintegration of Yugoslavia: its silent—and in parts of the LC conscious, or at least tolerated—transformation into another kind of Yugoslavia. Slovene Communists refuse to take any part in such activity.'⁸ Thus workers, party activists and top leaders concur: what is at stake is the legitimacy of the present political order

Contours of the Crisis

The specifically political manifestations of the current crisis can be dated with some accuracy from the demonstrations in Kosovo in the spring of 1981. This poorest region of Yugoslavia, at the centre of an unresolved national problem, registered the coming earthquake like a seismograph. By 1985, the leadership itself acknowledged that the country was facing an economic crisis, with a 5.5 per cent decline in the social product since 1979. A \$20 billion foreign debt was disclosed, inflation soared (by the end of 1988 it was to pass 250 per cent), and gross fixed investment was cut sharply back. In this situation, the political consensus within the LCY—and the intricate system of checks and balances which it had hitherto underpinned—simply collapsed. The economic crisis was expressed increasingly as a political crisis, indeed as a challenge to the whole socialist project.

The crisis did not affect all social layers equally. For social differentiation in Yugoslavia was by now quite dramatic—comparable to that in major

⁴ Published in *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, Split, 22 January 1989

⁵ Jelena Lovrić, *Danas*, Zagreb, 7 February 1989

⁶ Lovrić, *Danas*, 28 February 1989

⁷ Milan Kučan answers Janex Janša in *Delo*, Ljubljana, 5 November 1988; for a summary of the exchange, see *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, vol. 10, no. 3.

⁸ *Oslobodjenje*, Sarajevo, 5 February 1989.

Table One: Regional Differentiation in Yugoslavia

	<i>Population</i> ('000s)	<i>Per capita</i> <i>social product</i>	<i>Output per worker</i> <i>in social sector</i>	<i>Net personal income</i> ('000 dinars)	<i>Job seekers as %</i> <i>of workforce in social sector</i>
Slovenia	1,871	179	145	3140	1.7
Croatia	4,437	117	106	2208	7.7
Vojvodina	1,977	133	103	1885	15.2
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4,155	80	85	1736	23.9
Serbia*	5,574	94	93	1846	17.7
Montenegro	604	80	90	1522	24.5
Kosovo	1,760	36	69	1418	55.9
Macedonia	1,954	75	75	1399	27.0
Yugoslavia	22,334	100	100	2045	16.2

* Without Kosovo and Vojvodina

Source: Compiled from Tables 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3 in Harold Lydall, *Yugoslavia in Crisis*, Oxford 1989.

capitalist countries, according to Pero Jurković, professor of economics at the University of Zagreb.⁹ The crisis hit the working class with special severity as industrial growth stopped or went into reverse, large-scale unemployment emerged, and personal consumption fell by 7.7 per cent between 1979 and 1985. Insecurity has grown with the party's increasing commitment to radical liberalization of the economy—a policy which will have devastating consequences for the vast majority of workers, particularly in the underdeveloped south, without offering any clear social safeguards.¹⁰ The Federal government, which has had no trouble in recruiting 160 of the country's most eminent economists into its commission for economic reform, has at the same time utterly failed in its attempt to establish a parallel commission for social welfare. The Federation, republics and local communes are instead trying to outwit each other at the game of who should pay the bill. Nobody is willing to take responsibility for the coming storm, least of all the leading party. The unprecedented resignation of the government under trade-union pressure in the last days of 1988 was just one sign of the strength of current turbulence.

In addition, given the huge disparities of regional development, social differentiation has taken the form also of national inequality. This can be clearly seen from Table One.

The internal balance within the Federation has also changed in a dramatic fashion. In 1987, the three southernmost Federal units—Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro—announced that they were bankrupt. Bosnia-Herzegovina too entered a period of political turmoil—following the collapse of its huge agro-industrial complex 'Agrokomerc'.¹¹ This shifted the power of decision-making into the hands of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Vojvodina, and finally—after the takeover of Vojvodina by Serbia in 1988 (see below)—concentrated it in the hands of the former three. Simultaneously, the self-confidence of 'the vanguard party of the vanguard class', already badly dented, now finally evaporated, destroying in the process what remained of the authority of the Federal party centre. With workers resorting to mass strike action, the whole party-class alliance started to come apart. A powerful sense of malaise meanwhile engulfed the intelligentsia, favouring rightwing and nationalist currents.

The crisis strengthened the ever-present tendency of the republican and provincial parties to entrench themselves in local national constituencies. The outcome, however, varied considerably, given the wide economic disparities and differing national traditions. Slovenia—despite some setbacks¹²—underwent an extensive political democratization, with a host of political parties and organizations emerging by the beginning of 1989: despite the very real differences that exist among them, they share with the ruling party a commitment to national sovereignty and further democratization. By this time Croatia too had developed a fledgling

⁹ *Slart*, Zagreb, 10 December 1988.

¹⁰ The party leaderships of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, though deeply divided on key political issues, share nevertheless this economic orientation. In a recent speech to the republican assembly, for example, Milošević stated that market was the essence of democracy.

¹¹ Miha Kovač, 'The Slovene Spring', *New Left Review* 171, September–October 1988.

¹² *Ibid*.

alternative political scene, although here—for ethnic and historic reasons—differences between a local-national and a Yugoslav orientation were more sharply posed. In Macedonia, on the other hand, the economic collapse encouraged the local leadership to steer working-class despair into nationalist channels, directed against the substantial (21 per cent) Albanian minority.¹³

It was in Serbia, however, that the turn to the nation took its most intense form. The formal primacy of class politics was abandoned in favour of national consolidation with the accession of Slobodan Milošević to unchallenged power in the League of Communists of Serbia at the end of 1987, after a sharp inner-party struggle. This shift within Yugoslavia's largest republic, which further altered the political balance in the country and now threatens its federal constitution, is the principal concern of this article

Serbia: Constitutional Revisionists

The Socialist Republic of Serbia is formally the state of the Serb nation. Yet, as will be clear from the accompanying map, it does not embrace all Serbs, a significant proportion of whom live interspersed with Croats in Croatia and with Moslems and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This has invested the Serb national question with a contradictory role in Yugoslavia. National dispersion makes the Serbs especially sensitive to any weakening of Yugoslav unity, while any mobilization of them on a nationalist basis directly threatens Yugoslavia's federal structure. The Serb national question is made more complicated by the fact that the republic of Serbia contains also the vast majority of Yugoslavia's national minorities, which is why after the war (unlike the other republics) it was not constituted as a unitary state. Apart from Serbia proper, it contains two provinces: the Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (53 per cent Serb) in the north and the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo (almost 90 per cent Albanian) in the south.

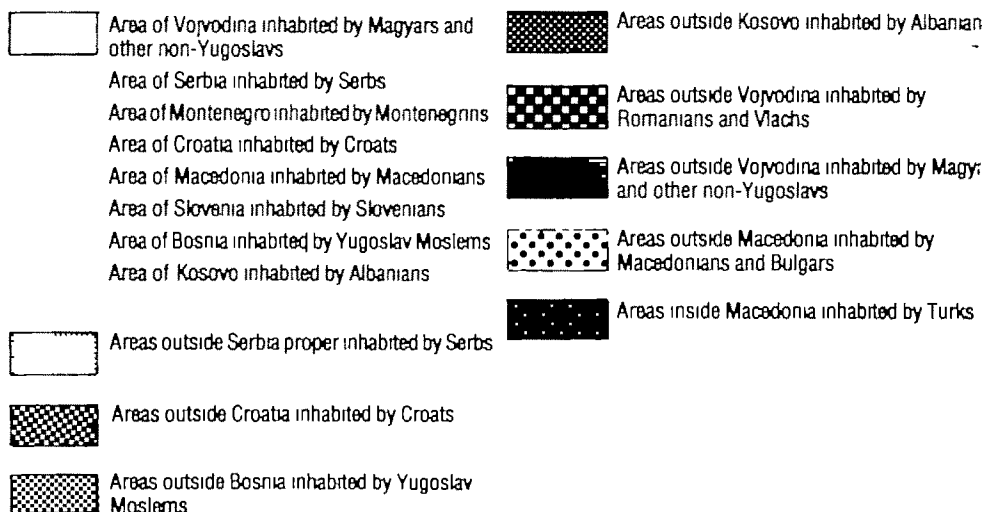
The Communist party saw the federal constitution of the post-war state as an instrument not only of individual national equality but also of Yugoslavia's unity. The Serbs (and the same could be said for Croats or Albanians) could not be united in a single republic without infringing the rights of other nationalities, so that the republics—though based on individual nationalities—had to remain ethnically mixed. The national rights of the individual nations were to be guaranteed as much by the country's federal order as by its unity.

Following the centralism of the postwar years, the 1974 constitution granted to the republics and provinces greater autonomy from the Federal centre, and to the provinces also greater independence from Belgrade. From a national and democratic point of view, this was an enormous step forward for Kosovo in particular. Self-government replaced the almost permanent state of emergency to which the Albanian population had been subject for most of the post-war period (1945-66), while the new

¹³ Darko Hudelist, *Start*, Zagreb, April 1988, gives an extraordinary portrayal of the popular mood in Macedonia, among both ethnic communities



The Ethnic Heterogeneity of Yugoslavia's Republics and Autonomous Provinces



Source: Reproduced with some modifications from
Gervail D. Raitanen: *Yugoslavia after Tito*, Westview
Press 1977

policy of national equality opened the door for its integration into the Yugoslav political community. Government by consent in Kosovo was also a condition of greater democracy in Serbia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia, since it diminished the power of the apparatus of repression (headed until 1966 by interior minister Alexander Ranković) which had been most resistant to the political and economic reforms of the 1960s—of which the 1974 constitution was precisely the outcome. What is more, the provinces now became constitutive elements of the Federation, with direct and equitable representation in all its party and state bodies. Implicit in this reform was the view that Yugoslavia could not be regarded as an exclusively South Slav state.

The reforms, however, contained a fundamental contradiction which was to qualify this advance. In the absence of any substantial extension of popular or inner-party democracy, political power remained concentrated in the hands of the republican and provincial leaderships, making party politics a permanent hostage to state-led nationalism. This was not an inevitable outcome, so long as the new, post-Ranković generation of liberals were in power in Serbia.¹⁴ But the purge of them in their turn in 1972, coming so soon after the removal of Ranković's administration, initiated a fragmentation of political power in Serbia. An older generation of second-ranking party leaders now came to the centre of the stage, many of whom tended to see the 1974 constitution not only as deepening the division of the Serb nation, but also as weakening Serbia's (republican) statehood. The reform gave the provinces a veto on all issues that affected them, so that the Belgrade leadership was no longer in full control over republican affairs. The presence of the provinces as independent actors at the Federal level also reduced the power and prestige of the Serbian leadership in Yugoslavia as a whole. In the mid 1970s a working commission of the Serbian party, under the guidance of Dragoslav Marković,¹⁵ gathered arguments against this enhanced provincial autonomy in what became known as the Blue Book. This sought the return to Belgrade control of the provinces' judiciary, police (including state security service), territorial defence and economic policy. Given that acceptance of these aims would certainly have involved a new bout of repression in Kosovo—and inevitably also rehabilitation of the Ranković administration and its admirers—the document received a hostile reception from the Federal leadership. The Blue Book was never publicly discussed, but the very fact of its existence allowed the issue of provincial autonomy to smoulder beneath the surface of Serbian politics until the 1980s, when it would acquire a new and potent charge.¹⁶

¹⁴ The best known were Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović. The term 'liberal' is customarily used to describe these reformers. Given their role in the suppression of the student movement in the late sixties, their democratic inclinations should not be overestimated.

¹⁵ Marković was a wartime partisan leader and one of the most influential Serbian politicians in the second half of the 1970s. In 1980 he was the head of the Federal Party.

¹⁶ Dragoslav Marković, *Život i politika 1967–76*, Belgrade 1987. It was the principle of equality of the South Slav nations with the national minorities that Marković in particular found difficult to accept, although in the end he submitted himself to party discipline and, it seems, also accepted the argument. In 1988 Marković publicly dissociated himself from the current Serbian leadership and was reviled as traitor to the nation in the Belgrade press.

By 1980, however, a new generation of political leaders had emerged in Serbia, grouped around Ivan Stambolić, which was successful in reunifying the republic's fractious politics. Stambolić was head of the Serbian government in 1980–82, head of the Belgrade party (with 230,000 members the largest in the country) in 1982–84; president of the Serbian party in 1984–86. In 1986 he became president of the republic of Serbia. His handpicked collaborators followed in his footsteps: Slobodan Milošević replaced him at the end of the Belgrade party in 1984, and as party chief in 1986;¹⁷ Dragiša Pavlović, another Stambolić protégé, took Milošević's place in Belgrade in the same year.¹⁸

By temperament a centralizer,¹⁹ Stambolić was a pragmatic politician who relied on his control of key posts (and, increasingly, the press) in his efforts to provide the republic with a new role in the Federation and to rally a motley group of liberals and conservatives around the quest for constitutional revision. Marković's earlier failure had exposed the sensitivity of other republics on the issue of the constitution, so Stambolić moved slowly and cautiously to win the agreement of the Federation. If, during his time in office, nationalists were allowed access to the media, this was more to put pressure on the Federation than out of any agreement with their views. For the Serbian party was faced with a seemingly insuperable barrier, in that constitutional changes had to be sanctioned by all three assemblies—in the two provinces as well as the republic as a whole—but approval from Vojvodina and Kosovo was not forthcoming. The provinces' stand was supported by the Federal party leadership, which was concerned about the implied reduction in the rights of the national minorities—most particularly the Albanians—and did not wish to see any alteration of the national balance within the Federation, since the consequences of this would be incalculable.

Stambolić at the same time sought support from a younger generation of Albanian leaders—like Azem Vllasi.²⁰ These, he hoped, might accept a new compromise in the constitutional field, if Belgrade in turn backed

¹⁷ Stambolić came from a peasant family—his father and uncle joined the partisans in 1941 (The uncle, Petar Stambolić, occupied the highest positions in Serbia and Yugoslavia in the late 1970s.) Initially a youth activist, he became a factory worker by choice and studied law as an extra-mural student at Belgrade University, where he met Slobodan Milošević—an Orthodox priest's son. Stambolić soon became manager of his enterprise, and brought in Milošević as his deputy.

¹⁸ Pavlović, who comes from a family of intellectuals, acquired degrees in engineering and economics at the University of Kragujevac, and finally a doctorate in politics at Belgrade University. As an intellectual with a propensity for hard work and an austere lifestyle, he was not much liked by the party apparatus.

¹⁹ For example, Stambolić wished to strengthen presidential power by having republican presidents elected by popular referenda, but this met with resistance even in his home state.

²⁰ Vllasi headed the Socialist Youth Alliance of Yugoslavia in the last years of Tito's life. After a long spell in the Federal centre, he returned to Kosovo to head the local Socialist Alliance. Among the first in Kosovo to call the Albanian 1981 demonstrations a 'counter-revolution', he became Kosovo party leader in 1986, at the head of a younger team, following a party purge. Two years later, however, after a vociferous campaign in the Belgrade press, he was replaced in 1988 by Kacusha Jashari. In February 1989, he was removed from the CC LCY. Today he sits in a Priština prison, charged with himself fomenting 'counter-revolution'.

their efforts to secure a modernization of Kosovo's political structures demanded by the enormous advance the province had made during the previous decade of self-government. However, by the time Stambolić had consolidated his position, the country had entered its current deep crisis, which strengthened conservative forces throughout Yugoslavia clamouring for an outright repression of critical voices from whatever quarter. In Croatia, under Stipe Šuvar's leadership, the party in 1984 produced a White Book on the Yugoslav intelligentsia which was clearly more of a blacklist. In Serbia, there was an attempt in the same year to organize a political show trial.²¹ In Slovenia, army courts were used in 1988 against uncomfortable critics. All these attempts, however, were rebuffed. Only through an alliance with nationalists could the party hardliners hope to prevail. Such an alliance was to emerge precisely in Serbia, where the issue of constitutional changes, integrating national and state concerns, allowed the emergence of a powerful rightwing bloc using the potent symbol of Kosovo to legitimize its political platform.

The Anti-Albanian Campaign

Kosovo was once the geographical centre of a short-lived mediaeval Serbian Empire, whose fragments were finally destroyed in 1389 by Ottoman armies. A collective memory of the battle survived in local folksongs, and the Orthodox Church—for its own reasons—invested this defeat of a secular power with a mystical dimension. In the mid 19th century, the Kosovo myth became an instrument of nation-building for the emergent Serbian principality. It was also used to justify territorial expansion to the south, aiming ultimately at Salonica, and served to mobilize the Serb peasantry for successive wars culminating in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. Since by this time Kosovo was predominantly Albanian-inhabited, the myth also acquired racial overtones. It became a symbol of the nation at war, a central point of reference for Serb nationalists.²² After the 1981 Albanian demonstrations, these began to complain ever more vociferously that Kosovo was becoming a purely Albanian province; that the 'cradle of the Serb nation' was becoming alienated from it. The Kosovo leadership was duly accused of encouraging Serb (and Montenegrin) emigration from the province, and the Albanian nation held to be guilty of ethnic genocide.

There is no doubt that Slavs have been emigrating from the region, but equally clearly the reasons have been mainly economic. (Already by 1970 Kosovo's unemployment reached fifty per cent of the working population, and Albanians have been leaving as well.) But Kosovo Slavs had been affected also by cultural-political factors. The rapid Albanization of the provincial administration from 1966 on was achieved by the use of

²¹ Milan Nikolić, a well-known socialist and a 1968 student leader who was one of the defendants in the now famous trial of the Belgrade Six, warned in his last defence speech of the growing danger of Stalinism in Yugoslavia and argued passionately the cause of socialism and democracy. *New Left Review* 150, March–April 1985.

²² For Četniks, Kosovo was 'the holy place of all Serbs'. More recently, at a meeting of the Association of Serb Writers, called for the purpose of severing all relations with the Association of Writers of Slovenia, its head, a well-known nationalist Matija Becković, stated that Kosovo would be Serb even if not a single Serb lived there.

national quotas, which reduced job opportunities for Slavs in the state sector where they had hitherto been privileged. In addition, thanks to the high birth-rate of the Albanians, their ethnic preponderance increased steadily, transforming linguistic, educational and cultural conditions in the new democratic period. An all-Yugoslav programme of investment directed mainly at Serb-inhabited communes—in order to prevent emigration—was agreed in 1987, although it was strictly unconstitutional. But this did little to change the desperate economic state of the province, and emigration (of both nationalities) continued. Worst of all, the Federal party leadership made a cardinal mistake: it described the 1981 Albanian demonstrations for republican status as an attempt at 'counter-revolution', led by Albanian separatists. This allowed Serb nationalists to cover themselves in the robes of the revolution's guardians.

At the end of 1986, a newly formed Kosovo Committee of Serbs and Montenegrins began to send delegations to Belgrade and to organize mass protest meetings in the province itself, complaining of 'genocide' and demanding a wholesale purge of Albanian leaders and the introduction of military rule in Kosovo.²³ A powerful coalition emerged in Serbia in the late 1980s, comprising retired policemen, revanchist migrants from the province (the 1966 fall of Ranković had led to an exodus of Serb administrative cadres, creating a potential 'irredentist' constituency), the Kosovo Committee, right-wing nationalists among the traditional intelligentsia, 'disillusioned' leftists, a wing of the Orthodox Church and sections of the party and state bureaucracy. The coalition entered public life with a now notorious petition—in which the then party and state leadership was accused of high treason.²⁴ As a result, by the end of 1986 Stambolić's policy of seeking constitutional revision through consensus came unstuck in Serbia as much as in Kosovo.

The nationalists strove to present Kosovo as a lawless society, run by extreme nationalists and irredentists bent on 'forceful assimilation and expulsion of the non-Albanian population'.²⁵ The official media joined in, sparing no methods. One of the most shameful was to invent daily stories about the rape of Serb women—despite all official statistics showing the absurdity of such racist fables. Another was to claim that the high Albanian birthrate was part of a nationalist plot and should be countered by discriminatory state measures. This hysterical campaign was effective. By 1987 Kosovo had become—in violation of both the letter and the spirit

²³ These visits created a tense emotional charge in the capital. 'From the first visits of Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins to Belgrade, reality began to be dangerously mixed with imagination and myth. Emotionally, people started to feel as if they themselves were living in Kosovo.' Dragiša Pavlović, *Olaks obična brzina*, Ljubljana-Zagreb 1988, p. 90. This book is the most systematic critique of resurgent Serbian nationalism to have appeared to date. It belongs to the best traditions of that Serbian socialism which has provided such a central component of Yugoslav revolutionary thought.

²⁴ This petition, signed by two hundred eminent Belgrade intellectuals, is published in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, vol. 9, no. 2, July–October 1987, together with a debate between Michele Lee and Mihailo Marković et al.

²⁵ Zagorka Golubović, Mihailo Marković and Ljubomir Tadić in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, *ibid.*, July–October 1987. In a style worthy of Vishinsky, the authors claim that Albanians are in their majority 'irredentists' and that their aim is to set up an independent (!) 'bourgeois society governed by a pro-fascist right-wing regime'.

of the constitution—a legal zone *sui generis*. Factories started to be built in Kosovo for Serbs only, Albanian families were evicted from Serb villages, sale of Serb-owned land to Albanians was prohibited, rape declared a political crime. Albanians were heavily sentenced for minor and frequently invented misdemeanors. A campaign of vilification was launched in the Belgrade press against those Albanian leaders (most notoriously Fadil Hoxha, member of the party since before the war, partisan general and member of the Federal state presidency) who had fought hard to win greater autonomy for Kosovo in the constitutional debates of 1966–73. Racial slurs in the media were tolerated. This anti-Albanian campaign in Serbia in turn encouraged the leadership of Macedonia to begin a policy of (unconstitutionally) restricting educational opportunities for Albanian children, limiting welfare benefits, at times even destroying Albanian houses, and generally discriminating against this part of the republic's population.

Not surprisingly, relations between the Kosovo and Serbian leaderships grew distinctly cool. The anti-Albanian campaign in Serbia was mounting so fast that the implications of any surrender of provincial autonomy for the preservation of basic national rights became quite stark. The newly emergent critical intelligentsia, which just like their counterparts in the rest of Yugoslavia chafed at bureaucratic rule, and the working class, which suffered still more from the high-handedness of the local Albanian bureaucracy, were inevitably drawn behind the latter into a struggle for defence of national rights. The process of democratization in Kosovo came to an abrupt end, under the mounting pressure from Serbia. The Albanian nation closed ranks.

Stambolić, who had made tactical accommodations to the Serbian nationalists, now discovered that they were emerging as a political force out of party control and were legitimizing a view of the history of Serbia and Yugoslavia which was not just anti-communist but viscerally reactionary. Under their pressure Serbia was moving in the direction of an open confrontation with the Federation. Serbian nationalists were joining forces with party hardliners, and indeed with all those who did not like growing political liberties.

The Split

Two clearly defined poles—one more liberal, the other nationalist-conservative—led respectively by Stambolić and Milošević, thus emerged in the Serbian party in early 1987.²⁶ Although the main line of differentiation was the attitude to growing Serb nationalism, the fundamental divide was really over the character and role of the party. The liberals were against party arbitration in the ideological field; they argued that a concept of party unity which outlawed the articulation of different opinions during formulation of the party line, on pain of expulsion, was contrary to party statutes. Milošević, on the other hand, pushed for a top-down monolithic party in complete control of the state and, increasingly, also one with a national vocation. Vigorous support for this orientation came from the party *aktiv* in the University of Belgrade, which had been

²⁶ An account of this split is to be found in Pavlović, *op. cit.*

captured by hardliners.²⁷ What was to cement Milošević's victory, however—against a background of economic crisis, working-class unrest and nationalist agitation—was the growing sense of insecurity throughout the Serbian party apparatus: the appeal to unity behind a strong leader proved irresistible for the majority of top and middle-rank cadres.

By 1987 the cause of inner-party democracy and the struggle against nationalism could no longer be differentiated. Milošević now began systematically to break collective discipline, refusing to speak against Serb nationalism at consecutive party plenums. Faced with the mounting nationalist counter-revolution, the liberals demanded that the party should go onto the offensive. The struggle between the two wings emerged into the open in April 1987; by September, at the 8th central committee plenum, the liberals had been thoroughly defeated. Pavlović and Stambolić were voted off the party presidency, removed from the central committee and finally expelled from the party together with their supporters and co-thinkers. Their departure marks also the date of the Serbian party's open endorsement of nationalism.²⁸

This brutal purge, together with the nationalist overtones of the televised 8th plenum debate, shocked the country. That the victory had not come easily, however, was proved by the viciousness of the subsequent campaign against the defeated party faction, and by the scale of the purge of key party and state organs. Particular attention was paid to the media. In a manner that combined the techniques of traditional Stalinism and the Western gutter press, all real and potential critics were characterized as 'anti-people'—that is, anti-Serb—and 'anti-party'. At the same time, a prompt expression of *total* loyalty to the new leadership—including the obligatory attack on its opponents—was made a condition of political survival and/or continued employment. After Kosovo, democracy was also snuffed out in Serbia.

In his letter of resignation from the central committee, Pavlović warned that 'the public denunciation and humiliation of people because, at a single meeting and on a single issue, they had a different position from the majority opens the way to a monolithic, Stalinist type of party, and the infallibility of the party leadership'.²⁹ Milošević—as the infallible leader of a monolithic Serbian party—is today able to disperse an emotional mass of hundreds of thousands (as he did in Belgrade on 28 February 1989) with a single sentence promising the arrest of counter-revolutionaries.

²⁷ Indeed, the liberals lost the first public duel fought over *Students*, the journal of Belgrade University undergraduates. In April 1987, *Students* carried a text arguing the existence of a Stalinist group in the University party *aktsiv*, naming several of Milošević's close supporters. The *aktsiv* replied by launching a public denunciation of *Students* as 'anti-Tito'. Pavlović, the head of the Belgrade party, and Branislav Milošević, then minister of culture, came in to defend *Students*. The University *aktsiv*, supported by *Pulinka*, under Slobodan Milošević's control, responded by extending the anti-Tito charge to them both.

²⁸ Pavlović recounts how, on joining the party in 1963, he had to state that he was not religious. 'It took another quarter of a century', he writes, 'for me to have to state that Serbdom was not my religion either—but this time round I was on the way to being expelled from the Central Committee, from the Belgrade party committee and from the League of Communists of Serbia itself'.

²⁹ *Op cit.*, p. 36.

The Resurgence of Reaction

The ideological basis of Milošević's victory was a coalescence of state-led nationalism and a neo-Stalinist concept of the party and its role in society. Their fusion into a coherent political project was made possible by the drive to restore the unity of the republican state—now reinterpreted as the state exclusively of the Serb nation. Belgrade's traditional hegemony over Serbia's cultural and political life gave its intelligentsia a decisive role in Milošević's rise to power, while the Serbian conservatives used the growing power of nationalism to deliver a mortal blow to their liberal opponents in the party.

There is no space here to survey the origins and progress of the momentous shift to the right that took place in Belgrade intellectual life in the course of the 1980s. In Serbia—and not only there—integration of the various trends of artistic and political thought increasingly took place on a uni-national plane, leading to different and indeed conflicting views of Yugoslavia's past and future. Yet it was in Serbia, above all, that the scope of intellectual critique changed dramatically, in that it reached beyond the usual complaints about the suppression of political and artistic liberties to challenge the party's entire historic legitimacy—and, in the process, also the revolution itself. This rightwing challenge, articulated above all in the language of virulent nationalism, returned to pre-war traditions.³⁰ Indeed, one of its ingredients was an effort to rehabilitate the Chetniks, as defenders of the nation against its 'historic' enemies—counterposing their 'prudent' wartime conduct to the alleged unnecessary sacrifice of Serb lives by the Communists.³¹ The history of pre-war Yugoslavia was rewritten in a manner designed to evoke sympathy for Serbian bourgeois politicians, especially in their military or state-building roles. Almost imperceptibly, a revision of the past merged with a reinterpretation of contemporary Yugoslavia, its character and problems, to produce a whole new world-view radically different from, and hostile to, the post-war political consensus.

While the Writers' Association of Serbia became at this time a bastion of populist nationalism, at times coloured with religious bigotry, nationalism in its state-centred form took root in the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, which in 1986 produced a document called the Memorandum. Involving the efforts of some of the best-known Serbian intellectuals, it represented the most sustained and coherent piece of revisionism of anti-communist orientation to appear legally in Yugoslavia in the post-war period.³²

³⁰ Its central aspiration is to re-establish the political hegemony Serbia enjoyed in prewar Yugoslavia, before its cancellation by the revolution.

³¹ A typical example of the genre is Dragoljub Živojinović and Dejan Lučić, *Barbarizam u ime Krista*, Belgrade 1988. This book accuses the Vatican, the Comintern and the CPY of a joint historic conspiracy ('clerocommunism'), including genocide, against the Serb nation.

³² This judgement, fully shared by the present author, is argued out by Pavlović, *op. cit.*, pp. 280–92. Extracts from the document were published in *Vučerjske Novosti*, Belgrade, 24–25 September 1986.

The Memorandum argued that, after the Liberation, an 'alien' (ie., federated) model of Yugoslavia was imposed on the Serb nation. The main culprit was the CPY, which had blindly followed the Comintern's anti-Serb 'policy of revanchism including genocide' during the war and, by endorsing the federal structure, exposed the Serbs after the war to discrimination. The second culprit was the Slovenes and Croats (represented by the Slovene Edvard Kardelj and the Croat Josip Broz Tito), who 'created a social and economic order in accordance with their needs and interests' that was fundamentally inimical to the Serbs. The 1974 constitution then deprived the Serbs of the right to their own (integral) state. The third culprit was domestic quislings: 'the hardened opportunism of generations of Serb politicians after the war'.³³

The situation in Kosovo, the Memorandum stated, was 'Serbia's biggest defeat since 1804' (the date of the first Serb uprising against the Ottoman state). 'In 1981 a war—a truly special, open and total war—was declared against the Serb nation... with active and open support of certain political centres in the country; a war far more devastating than that coming from across the border.' In this war, the Serb nation remained alone: the LCY avoided 'a real showdown with the neo-fascist aggression', while the leadership in Serbia 'seem[ed] unwilling to respond to this open war in the only appropriate manner: a resolute defence of the nation and its territory.'

But if the Communists had deserted the nation, why did it not rise to defend itself? This was because the nation was the victim of a cruel ideological trick perpetrated by the LCY, with its endorsement of the Comintern thesis that the Serbs had oppressed other nations in pre-war Yugoslavia. The resulting 'guilt complex' or 'state of depression in the Serb nation' was 'fateful for its spirit and morale'. Its intellectual and spiritual leaders must carry out 'a total re-examination of all social relations', beginning with 'a total re-examination of the constitution', in order to restore the 'vitality' of the nation. A resurrection of its democratic past was also required: 'Because of the narrow-mindedness and lack of objectivity of official historiography, the democratic tradition which bourgeois Serbia fought for and won in the 19th century has remained until now completely overshadowed by the Serb socialist and workers' movement.'³⁴

The Memorandum's xenophobic nationalism and Chetnik echoes would earlier have elicited a swift condemnation from the Serbian party. This time, however, the counter-attack was never mounted, since the leadership was split over how to deal with domestic nationalism. Stambolić, president of the republic, and Pavlović, head of the Belgrade party,

³³ Similar views were held by the wartime Chetniks and Royal government-in-exile, who insisted that the federal conception of the future state was directed against Serb national interests. See memorandum by Constantin Foinč, Yugoslav Royalist ambassador to the United States, submitted to the founding conference of the United Nations. *Danas*, Zagreb, 28 February 1989.

³⁴ Pavlović condemned the *Memorandum* for seeing Yugoslavia as an extended Serbia or, alternatively, placing Serbia outside Yugoslavia altogether. The document, he wrote, is the product of 'a primitive, anachronistic and sick Serb consciousness, ignorant and intolerant of Serb diversity. Its understanding of national equality betrays a bureaucratic mentality—it is a moral negation of any true democracy in Yugoslavia.' Op. cit., p. 331.

condemned the Memorandum in public soon after its publication. But although the Serbian party presidency and central committee also formally condemned it, this fact was—at Milošević's insistence—kept secret from the public. The silence of the highest political authority, naturally, spoke louder than words. For not only did it suggest tacit support, it also inhibited public discussion of the Memorandum at the time when it was most needed.

Nationalism Triumphant

The battle which the Serbian liberals joined in 1987 was by this time being fought throughout Yugoslavia. In 1986, Milan Kučan—after a period of work in Federal organs—returned to take over the party leadership in Slovenia. Kučan knew well that a powerful conservative bloc was emerging within the party, ready to play the card of social insecurity to block the necessary economic and political reforms; that the ruling party's decline in numbers and prestige limited, in any case, its ability to go it alone; and that, therefore, an alliance with progressive forces outside the party was imperative. But whereas the political mood in Slovenia (and, to a lesser extent, in Croatia) supported such a course, the unresolved constitutional problem favoured the nationalists and party hardliners in Serbia. The latter openly argued that enemies of the system were to be found in the highest political positions—on the editorial boards of student and youth magazines; in the republican Assembly; in the League of Communists and its central committee; even in the party presidency—at the same time that the nationalist intelligentsia accused the party liberals of being 'soft' on Kosovo. By playing the Kosovo card, Milošević was able to place himself at the head of the emergent nationalist-conservative coalition, crush the liberal opposition and—by forging 'unity' within the party—satisfy also the morbid fear of the central apparatus that the party was losing control over political life in the republic. From now on, all criticism of the party leadership was presented as an attack on Serb national interests.

It was with his speech of 27 April 1987 at Kosovo Polje—the organizing centre of Serb and Montenegrin nationalists in Kosovo—that Milošević broke collective party discipline in the most spectacular fashion and inaugurated his bid for power in the League of Communists of Serbia. In his address to the assembled Slavs, he spoke of the injustice and humiliation they were suffering; of their ancestral land; of the proud warrior spirit of their forefathers; of their duty to their descendants. The speech was aimed at the people's emotions: listening to the speech, Pavlović saw 'an idea turned into a dogma, the Kosovo myth becoming a reality'. Milošević spoke like a general addressing his troops before a decisive battle. 'It was here that the orientation towards war-like measures for the solution of the Serb and Montenegrin problems in Kosovo started', Pavlović writes.³⁵

³⁵ Op. cit., p. 312. Pavlović adds: 'If I experienced the speech in this manner, then I can only imagine how this recall of the "fighting spirit" of the Serb and Montenegrin nations must have been experienced by Albanians. After all, Albanians also have ancestors and could also recall their "fighting spirit". They also have a collective consciousness, they also are a warrior nation with their own heroes and a fighting tradition.'

Milošević endorsed the view that the Serb nation was at war, and offered the nationalists the support of the party. He thereby, in effect, removed Kosovo Serbs (and Montenegrins) from the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities, tearing up in the process the existing constitution. The head of the League of Communists of Serbia was speaking not on behalf of the party (which, of course, includes also Albanians and other non-Serbs), not on behalf of the republic's (ethnically heterogeneous) working class, but on behalf of the Serb nation—anywhere in Yugoslavia. In a direct challenge to the fundamental principle of the Yugoslav federation, he was thus endorsing the bourgeois nationalism recently re-formulated by the Memorandum: 'The establishment of the full national and cultural integrity of the Serb nation, irrespective of the republic and province in which it finds itself, is its historic and democratic right.' The leadership of Croatia, this implied, legitimately represented only Croats, that of Slovenia only Slovenes, and so on. In Kosovo Polje, Milošević conjured up the spectre of Yugoslavia's Balkanization.

On his return from Kosovo Polje, the party president—now acclaimed as national *vožd*—called a meeting of the party executive. His report was delivered in a manner designed to create an emotional impact within this body—for Milošević was seeking *post facto* authorization for his speech. 'What we are discussing here can no longer be called politics—it is a question of our fatherland.' It was important that the party base should understand this: 'It is when we begin to speak at party meetings in this manner that the party will be able to take things into its hands.' And he reminded the meeting that he was not only president of the Central Committee but also the head of security and territorial forces in the republic.³⁶

The Serbian party now found itself in the embarrassing position of being openly hailed by people whom not long before it had customarily denounced as hardened nationalists. Yet Serbia has an old socialist tradition: when Milošević addressed party members and the nation with the words: 'Only determination and belief in the future could have transformed the defeat of a nation such as happened at Kosovo into a brilliant clasp linking all future generations of Serbs—an eternal symbol of its national essence', a hundred years earlier the Serb socialist Svetozar Marković had already given the answer: 'Serbia does not depend on the revival of the dead, on rotten material, for erecting the foundation of its future. Other ideals must be provided for its future.' And when the party leader went to address meeting after meeting to press the message that recentralization of the republican state was Serbia's 'historic task', and the Belgrade press wrote about 'the third Serbian uprising', he was answered by another Serb socialist, Dimitrije Tucović, who in 1912 had denounced the bourgeois war-mongers preparing for the Balkan Wars: 'The historic task of Serbia is a big lie.'

³⁶ Pavlović, *op. cit.*, p. 318. In April of 1986 Stambolić had given quite a different speech at Kosovo Polje. 'Do not allow yourself to be provoked either by the [Albanian] irredentists or by Serb nationalists. People like that are the greatest enemies of our country. They do not act because they like you—they are playing their own game. They wish to divide and rule. The Serb nationalists in Belgrade are not working so as to make life better for you. Their motto is: the worse off you are, the better it is for their nationalist aims.' *Danas*, 8 November 1988.

The resurgence of Serb nationalism was instilling fear not just in the rest of Yugoslavia but also in the head of the Belgrade party, who during that spring and summer watched the media's assiduous fostering of an image of Albanians as dangerous, primitive and anti-Yugoslav.³⁷ They spoke of the Albanian people in the language of blood, rape and murder, while passing in silence over the welling violence of Serb nationalist meetings in Kosovo, with their slogans: 'Kill Fadil [Hoxha]!', 'An eye for an eye!', 'Brothers do not be afraid; the time has come for a final showdown!', 'The Serb nation has always shed blood for its freedom!', 'Let us go, brothers and sisters, to attack Kosovo!'. The media were doctoring facts, inciting to revenge, publishing with approval pictures of raised fists and of Serbs arming themselves in Kosovo 'for defence of their homes'. The Serb population was being moulded into an angry mass, 'aiming for a national catharsis that can only end in tragedy'. As Pavlović was to write about the principal Belgrade daily *Politika*, it was 'dynamite under Serbia'.

This had very practical consequences, since it was creating a security problem in the capital city. Pavlović told the Belgrade party that its task was to fight not irredentism in Kosovo but Serb nationalism at home. He complained at meetings of the party presidency that at Serb nationalist rallies the word 'comrade' was replaced by 'brother' and 'working class' by 'nation'. The press, radio and television were increasingly becoming an instrument of the power struggle within the party leadership. Pavlović warned that the forces of the Ranković era were being rehabilitated; and that, in effect, 'Tito, Kardelj and the policy of the LCY were being put on trial'. Milošević was sowing the illusion that the Kosovo problem was a matter of subjective determination, while the nationalists saw its solution in terms of national confrontation. Their continual rallies (both in Kosovo and in Belgrade) were increasingly dangerous: 'A political climate is being prepared in Belgrade that seeks a state of emergency, a firm hand in Kosovo.' Yet 'without the participation of the Albanian masses there can be no real or lasting results. And how can we win and mobilize them if we continually sow doubt in their Yugoslav patriotism?' Pavlović denounced the press for talking about Kosovo 'in words reeking of lead and gunpowder, revenge and revanchism, the renewal of the suicidal Vidovdan [Kosovo] myth.' And, on an ominous note, he added: 'If a nation adopts the right to be angry, how can it deny the same to another? A confrontation of two nations leads to a war. Instead of redirecting anger towards a rational understanding of problems and their solutions, the appeal to anger serves to strengthen the authority of the speaker.'

Neo-Stalinism

The conflict within the Serbian party was not just about Kosovo, but also about 'the place and role of the party in overcoming the crisis, and in the struggle against nationalist counter-revolution. Kosovo was intentionally being substituted for something deeper and more serious.' When he heard Milošević remind the party presidency that he, as head of the Serbian party, was also in charge of the republic's territorial army, Pavlović

³⁷ Indeed, non-Yugoslav: claiming that 400,000 immigrants from Albania settled in Kosovo during and after the war, the nationalists have been demanding in effect a large-scale expulsion of Yugoslav Albanians from Yugoslavia.

realized that the split in the party was inevitable. 'After these words, our ways parted: I began to run away from the tragedy, while he started to run towards it. An angry mass disposes of a tremendous striking power. And who will be its target?' Ultimately the federation, since 'the drive to unite the Serbs into a single state would inevitably bring them into conflict with other nations in Yugoslavia'.

At the height of the inner-party struggle, in September 1987, Pavlović urgently called a press conference to denounce the nationalist paroxysm in Serbia.³⁸ He was armed with the Federal state presidency's recommendation that the Serbian central committee, and especially the Belgrade party, should 'paralyse the nationalist and anti-Albanian activities of the bourgeois Right and all other anti-socialist forces present in the Writers' Association, certain sections of the Academy and other associations, publishing houses, institutions and public forums.' The Federal state presidency had further demanded 'a sharp differentiation' in order to 'prevent publishing and editorial policy being used to spread anti-Albanian sentiments'. Pavlović stated that those who did not struggle against Serb nationalism were in the business of fanning nationalist hatred. Those who did so were 'defending the honour of the Serb nation, of their profession and of socialist Yugoslavia'. Pavlović warned his audience that in Serbia—as elsewhere—the nation was made up of at least two camps, and that party members should state clearly which one they belonged to. In a scarcely veiled reference to Milošević, he criticized those who 'irresponsibly promise speed' in solving the Kosovo problem. This speech was promptly denounced by the Belgrade dailies as 'anti-party' and 'anti-Serb'. At a hurriedly convened meeting of the Serbian party presidency, Milošević accused Stambolić and Pavlović of bringing disunity into the Serbian party, and called for 'differentiation' on the issue of support for 'the party line' in relation to Kosovo. At this fateful meeting, which started the process of his political demise, Pavlović argued that 'nationalism is the final instrument, the last defence of dogmatism. In my opinion, the key problem lies in the unwillingness to confront Serb nationalism.'³⁹

For most of 1987 a momentous battle was being waged between liberals and hardliners for the soul of the Serbian party. It was a battle between 'democracy and authoritarianism, self-management and bureaucratic etatism, national equality and nationalism, federation and unitarism, freedom and fear'.⁴⁰ The liberals were defeated in the end not by force of argument, but by a party machinery based on Stalinist conceptions of unity and democratic centralism. When Milošević called at the September 1987 plenum for Pavlović's removal, he won by emphasizing the need for party unity. Without it, he claimed, no problem—including notably that of Kosovo—could be tackled. It was the unchallengeable power of the executive over the central committee that ensured him the overwhelming majority on the latter body. In his letter of resignation from the central committee, Pavlović wrote 'The machine of democratic centralism—that

³⁸ A shortened version of his speech is in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, vol. 9, no. 3, November 1987–February 1988.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

is, of centralism—grinds down, in the name of a single, self-confident, egocentric and imposed opinion, those who are sincerely convinced as well as those who are not; breaks down the wise and the honest along with the careerists and lackeys, levels the sceptics with the gullible, naïve and uninformed. It transforms them all into subjugated individuals.⁴¹

Pavlović's letter of resignation was the swansong of opposition to resurgent Stalinism in the Serbian party. It echoes with resonances of the Soviet opposition's struggle against Stalin himself. In a situation where the authority of the party or party leader replaces internal dialogue, where instruction from above substitutes for the initiative of party members, 'does this not lead to a situation in which the party is reduced to one individual who speaks eternal truth? Following the "top down" principle, the CC is today being asked to give full support to the line of the 8th plenum, that is, to Milošević. Since when do the views of one man represent the sum total of the party's position on Kosovo? The impression is given that he is the only one in the leadership who wants to—and can—solve the Kosovo problem and that, therefore, he is able also to solve quickly all other social problems. Those who do not agree are being purged and purges are being treated as the supreme example of democratic centralism in action—but what will happen when it turns out that purges only postpone the necessary solutions?'⁴²

In his book, Pavlović recalls Trotsky's early warning against an authoritarian understanding of democratic centralism, and contrasts the conceptions of Lenin or Trotsky with that of Stalin. Lenin woke up too late to the danger which Stalin represented for the Soviet party, possibly because 'under Lenin's control, democratic centralism was an instrument of the revolution's achievements. But in Stalin's hands it became a kind of private guillotine cutting off the heads of all those who thought differently.' Pavlović thus calls for the legitimization of differences within the party and the right of tendencies to exist within it. And, indeed, only a concept of democratic centralism in which the tension between 'democratic' and 'centralism' was maintained could offer a real future to the LCY.

Whereas, in Kosovo Polje, Milošević offered himself as a liberator of the Serb nation, Pavlović argued that liberty cannot be treated as an exclusively national category. 'I have never fought for Serbs to be freed, but for them to be free in relation to one another.' For otherwise they are faced with the far greater problem of having to free themselves from their liberator. 'It is here that Slobodan and myself differ. Only socialist democracy can unite and stabilize Yugoslavia, and only a democratic Serbia can be a strong factor of Yugoslav cohesion. Any other Serbia can attract only fear and suspicion.'⁴³ If nationalism can be defeated only from within the

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 228

⁴² Ibid., pp. 223–9. Pavlović admits his own responsibility for helping to create an authoritarian atmosphere in the party and republic by not speaking up earlier. Before his expulsion, he was offered a good job if he would resign; but he refused and thus became an object of universal bureaucratic hate in his own republic. Unemployable in Serbia, he finally moved to Slovenia, proving that a Yugoslav can live in exile in his own country.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 223–9.

nation, and if the League of Communists of Serbia—which has the monopoly of political power—has abandoned internationalism, then who is going to lead the struggle against nationalist counter-revolution in Serbia? Pavlović sought the answer once more in the Serbian socialist tradition: 'With the same energy with which we are ready to protest against the foreign tyrant, let us also protest against the tyrants at home, those whose alleged love of the people allows them to be the greatest reactionaries and whose patriotism does not prevent them from being the greatest black marketeers.' A bureaucracy aligned to nationalism can be defeated only by a re-statement of the Yugoslav socialist project, based on the power of the working class. For this Serb, Yugoslav and Communist, no call to arms to defend national rights within socialist Yugoslavia was legitimate: such a call could justifiably be issued only to defend the socialist foundation of the Yugoslav federal state.

A Nation at War

Having crushed the opposition in the Serbian party, the Milošević faction now turned to the business of unifying the nation, in order to prepare for a final onslaught on the two barriers to constitutional revision: the leaderships of Vojvodina and Kosovo, and the Federal party leadership itself. Serbia, which only a few years earlier had been a lively centre of activity and debate, suddenly succumbed to a numbing 'unity'. The capital of Yugoslavia became the headquarters of an embattled Serb nation. The media were used, as in wartime, to attack the enemy; punish traitors; report on the situation at the front (drawn against practically all other republics⁴⁴ and the two provinces); raise the national spirit; recall past victories; commemorate the wounded and dead in past battles going back to the 14th century. The message was that of a heroic nation, surrounded by perfidious enemies. The military prowess of the defunct bourgeoisie was honoured by erecting statues of its generals. Serbian peasant dress, especially hats, became a sudden fashion. This orgy of national self-pity and exhilaration was—and is—at times interrupted only by reports of marching workers, coming from Serbia and beyond to Belgrade to protest against low wages or the real or threatened bankruptcy of their enterprises and to demand the resignation of managers and functionaries.

An extremely important role in this orchestrated process of national homogenization has been played by mass rallies in solidarity with Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. Ostensibly spontaneous, they have been carefully organized and financed by the party-state machine.⁴⁵ During 1988 such rallies—tens of thousands strong—took place in practically every major city or village in Serbia. At these—as well as at party plenums, republican assembly sessions, trade-union conferences and meetings of the party base; in universities, factories and schools; at suitable state occasions—one message was constantly hammered home: the Serb

⁴⁴ With the exception of Macedonia the Macedonian party's anti-Albanian policy has made it the Serbian leadership's natural ally, despite the fact that Serb nationalism also has an anti-Macedonian edge (Macedonia was once included in the mediaeval Serbian empire, and Macedonians were classified as 'South Serbs' in pre-war Yugoslavia.)

⁴⁵ As a result, and this must be stressed, these rallies never led to violence

nation is fragmented because its state is divided into three pieces. Milošević spoke of the historic hour: 'Serbia will be united or it will not exist.' The Belgrade press wrote about 'the third Serbian uprising'.

The disinclination of the Serbian party to submit itself to the Federal party's authority simultaneously grew. National mobilization in Serbia and the aggressive tone of its press resulted in rising tensions throughout the country, and in the summer of 1988 the Federal party Presidency demanded of Belgrade that nationalist demonstrations be stopped. The republican leadership refused. Its representatives simply declined to attend meetings of the Presidency until its demands were met. The frequency of the rallies if anything increased throughout the autumn, their mood growing more militant. Slogans demanding arms and the criminal prosecution of other Yugoslav leaders (in the case of Albanian leaders also their execution) became frequent. No party or state leader—be they from another republic or province or from the Federation, and irrespective of his or her status—who appeared not to harbour 100 per cent support for the 'new course' in Serbia was exempt from the hate campaign.⁴⁶

Nationalist rallies now spread into Vojvodina and Montenegro, demanding the local leaderships' resignation. These rallies were by now seriously destabilizing the country, opening the possibility that—in a repetition of the Polish 1981—the army might have to take over. In October, Yugoslav State President Raif Dizdarević warned—without mentioning the culprit by name—that the country might have to be placed under a state of emergency. Faced with the readiness of the Serbian leadership to use the card of civil war to settle inner-party differences (what the Bolshevik party's left wing described as 'Bonapartism' during its struggle with Stalin), the Federal party finally gave its assent to Serbia's recentralization, and thereby to a significant reduction in the hard-won national rights of the two million Albanians. This policy of appeasement was, however, rejected by the Serbian party, which now simply informed the Federation that the internal affairs of the republic of Serbia were its *exclusive* prerogative. In early October the *party* leadership of the province of Vojvodina was overthrown by a carefully planned and orchestrated mass action. It was replaced by Milošević's appointees, ready to enact the desired constitutional changes.

The Federal party leadership took the next fatal step by legitimizing *post facto* this undemocratic and illegal method of changing not just the republic's constitution, but also the character of the Yugoslav federation.⁴⁷ What is more, in accepting the Vojvodina party leaders' resignations, it

⁴⁶ In a recent interview Dušan Dragosavac, a former partisan and member of the political leadership in Croatia, who had been targeted in this way, summed up the situation as follows: 'This is nothing but an anti-communist strategy, the creation of hatred among the nationalities, the creation of discord in the League of Communists. It is a permanent witch-hunt, anti-statutory and lawless.' *Danas*, 13 December 1988. Dragosavac's 'crime' lies in his open hostility to nationalism—compounded by the fact that he is ethnically a Serb.

⁴⁷ It must have known what was going to happen, for—breaking with normal practice—it failed to send any representative to the meeting of the Vojvodina party committee scheduled for the day of the resignations, thus leaving it to face the demonstrators' wrath alone.

also broke its own party statutes.⁴⁸ The Vojvodina putsch was organized by local power groups, not all of whom were party members. By sanctioning their act, the Federal party allowed alien bodies to intervene in its internal life, to the point of removing topmost party leaders. Where this practice could lead was illustrated dramatically only a day after the Vojvodina events, when a demonstration of angry Montenegrin workers in Titograd was exploited as the backdrop to a determined attempt to replace the local republican leadership with Milošević's men. The possibility that Yugoslavia's whole Federal structure might collapse now prompted the Slovenian, Croatian and Bosnian leaders to act. Under their pressure, the Federal party leadership condemned the Titograd demonstrations and gave the local party the green light for a show of force—in another sorry precedent. The Montenegrin leadership, however, survived for only two more months: in January 1989 it was finally overthrown by an organized mass action, leaving Montenegro in a state of political chaos and its relations with the Federation in Milošević's hands.

Milošević was now ready to round on the Federal party leadership itself. The Belgrade press launched a well-rehearsed campaign, demanding the resignation of the Federal party presidency and its current head Stipe Šušar. The televised 17th Plenum of the CC LCY—held on 17–20 October 1988—exposed the open breach to the gaze of the whole country. In an unprecedented move, the Federal party presidency asked the CC for a vote of confidence: when the vote was counted, Dušan Ckrebčić, a close collaborator of Milošević, alone had been voted down.⁴⁹ Milošević then refused to accept the vote, and the Belgrade press denounced the all-Yugoslav Central Committee as an 'unprincipled alliance' directed against Serbia! A month after the plenum, the Serbian leadership organized a 350,000-strong public meeting in Belgrade, at which the 'fighting spirit of the Serbian nation' was once again hailed, other Yugoslav leaders attacked and a 'united' (as opposed to federal) Yugoslavia proclaimed. 'No force can now stop Serbia's unification!' screamed the front-page headlines.⁵⁰ They were not counting with the Albanian working-class.

Wedding without Meat

On 17 November 1988, the day before the Belgrade rally, a meeting of the Provincial Committee of the League of Communists of Kosovo was to be convened in Prishtina to discuss the resignations of Kaqusha Jashari and Azem Vllasi, respectively the current party President and her immediate predecessor, which had been arranged as part of the deal on the constitution between the Federal and Serbian leaderships. That morning, miners from the Trepča 'Stari Trg' mine, after completing the night shift, emerged from the 38 degrees Celsius of their pit into the freezing dawn, joined forces with the day shift and began the seventy-kilometre march to Prishtina. They were the vanguard of what turned out to be the largest

⁴⁸ The impression was given that it was not worth defending an unpopular leadership. Why then did the party not argue in favour of new elections, in accordance with its statutes?

⁴⁹ This rare recourse to democracy proved that a considerable number of Serbian members must have voted against him in the secret ballot.

⁵⁰ *Politika*, Belgrade, 20 November 1988

Albanian demonstration since the war: half-a-million participants over the next five days.

Journalists met them half-way. 'They were wearing their shabby miners' outfits and looked quite exhausted. The front row carried a picture of Tito, two miners' flags, the party flag, Yugoslav, Albanian and Turkish flags. Their slogans. "Tito-Party!"; "Jashari-Vllasi!"; "Tito-Kardelj!";²³ "We will not surrender our cadres!"; A correspondent from the daily *Borba*, one of the rare Yugoslav journalists able to speak the Albanian language (only three out of thirty Yugoslav journalists then accredited to Prishtina were in possession of this essential tool of their trade!), asked a miner if they were going to Prishtina to complain about their wages. 'Everybody gathered around to listen. The miner answered that this was a day for politics, not for tears. The journalist said that politics was a dangerous business—the "specials" were ahead and there might be trouble. The grim-faced man responded angrily: "Journalist, have you ever seen a wedding without meat?"'.²⁴

Once in Prishtina, the miners were joined by other workers, then by students and youth, followed by secondary and primary school children—eighty per cent of the participants were below the age of twenty—and soon also by the older generation, coming from all parts of Kosovo (as well as western Macedonia). The aims of this highly disciplined protest were to express their rejection of the proposed changes in the constitution of the Republic of Serbia; to prevent, in that context, the enforced resignation of the two provincial leaders.²⁵ This defence of national rights was phrased in the immaculate language of democracy. In interviews freely given, the miners made it clear that if the province's status was to be changed, if its leadership was to be purged, then this must be done in an open, democratic debate and not imposed by force. The workers said what the Federal party should have said—but did not. In those freezing November days and nights, the marching workers, students and children acted as a true socialist vanguard. That November Yugoslavia was celebrating the 45th anniversary of the revolutionary state's foundation and the Albanian workers paid it homage in the best possible manner: by defending one of its fundamental achievements.

Although the Provincial Committee acknowledged the resignations (no vote was taken, the outcome having been determined elsewhere) and the miners thus failed to achieve their formal aims, they did give advance warning that they were prepared to organize a general strike if the proposed changes were carried out. After the demonstration, the Serbian party predictably described the Prishtina events as the latest example of an escalating 'counter-revolution'. The Federal party came very close to agreeing with them.²⁶ The Kosovo leadership, however, argued that they were 'in line with the 17th party plenum'.

²³ The late Edvard Kardelj, one of Tito's closest collaborators, was the chief architect of the 1974 constitution.

²⁴ *NIN*, Belgrade, 10 November 1988.

²⁵ The workers were particularly angry at the charge made a few days earlier by the president of the Serbian Trade Union Alliance that 'counter-revolution' was deeply embedded in the Kosovo party and state organs and at Prishtina University, but above all in the Albanian working class!

²⁶ Its Presidency did in fact endorse this view, without consultation with the CC—breaking the party statutes in the process.

The intensifying battle within the country's leadership meanwhile went through another futile round at the 20th plenum of the central committee of the LCY. By now it was quite clear that the party was split from top to bottom into two opposed coalitions. The plenum was nevertheless united in confirming once again its support for Serbia's constitutional demands: Albanian national rights were treated as small coin in a much vaster exchange. Azem Vllasi was removed from the central committee and three highly disliked officials placed in charge of the Kosovo party. Their sole task was to ram the required constitutional changes through the Kosovo assembly. The Albanian working class responded by organizing a general strike. The federal state answered with military force and mass arrests. The stakes were getting higher at each round, and they concern not just Kosovo but Yugoslavia as a whole.

Whither Yugoslavia?

In Kosovo, the Yugoslav leadership is faced with two options: the democratic one, which means recognizing the legitimate aspirations of the Albanian population, or permanent military occupation, which will lead to democracy being extinguished throughout Yugoslavia. This is the central message of the Ljubljana Declaration of 1 March 1989 against the state of emergency in Kosovo. Supported by all political and social organizations in Slovenia as well as the Helsinki Federation groups in Zagreb and Belgrade, the Declaration has been signed by a million people in Slovenia—out of a total population of two million!³⁵

Balkanization of Yugoslavia has never been inscribed either in its multinational composition or in its federal structure. The unity of the country rests on a recognition of its ethnic plurality. However, the rise of state-led nationalism in Serbia is threatening to break Yugoslavia into a force-field of warring nationalities, pushing the country back into the past. Since the current party leadership in Serbia can survive only by constant invention of enemies, any suppression of Yugoslav democracy will be carried out in the name of a South Slav 'national' unity. But which people's rights can ever be safeguarded by the denial of similar rights to another? How could the federal structure survive such a triumph of Yugoslav unitarism?³⁶ Any suppression of democracy will likewise be carried out in the name of party unity. The balance between the hardliners and their opponents has shifted in favour of the former and, at the extraordinary party congress due in December 1989, they will try to impose a Stalinist monolithicity on the rest of the LCY. However, far from uniting it, this would lead only to the party's disintegration—to a mass exodus of its members. Since Yugoslavia is a party state, moreover, this would cripple all state institutions, making military intervention ultimately inevitable.

The two coalitions within the party are well aware of what is at stake. Yet, with the partial exception of Kučan in Slovenia, nobody in power has

³⁵ *Delo*, Ljubljana, 2 March 1989.

³⁶ In a prescient passage Pavković wrote, 'It is not the aggressive character of Albanian nationalism, nor the appearance of Serb revanchism, nor indeed the emergence of separatist Serb nationalism, that is potentially the most dangerous form of nationalism in Yugoslavia today. It is Serb chauvinist *unitarism*' (my italics). *Op. cit.*, p. 335

addressed these fateful questions openly and directly. The democratic camp has been muted and ineffective, reluctant from the start to confront Milošević. The Croatian and Slovenian party leaders have failed to protest at the illegal methods of changing the country's constitution, at the Stalinist methods used to remove Milošević's opponents in the Serbian party, at his constant infringement of party statutes, at the Serbian party's condoning of ever more frequent calls to violence against party and state officials or even whole nations.⁷⁷ While the current leaders in Serbia have trampled the party's statutes and the country's constitution underfoot, their Croatian and Slovenian counterparts have responded by backing Serbia's constitutional demands without expressing the least doubt as to their democratic nature—albeit protesting when the inevitably undemocratic enforcement of them has led to workers being victimized. Like Belgrade, they too apparently reckoned without the Albanian workers' determination—which has, indeed, been most inconvenient for their politics of appeasement. Their passivity has derived from a fundamental delusion that the political field in Yugoslavia can be isolated into so many watertight (republican) compartments. Federal bodies, meanwhile, have been used to give the semblance of unity to an increasingly divided party, thus making more difficult an all-Yugoslav counter-offensive against the mounting reaction.

Clearly, the formulation of an alternative to Milošević must rupture the facade of so-called democratic centralism. Readiness to break the collective discipline of the League of Communists has become the hallmark of the Serbian party under Milošević. Why then is the other side so scrupulous in its adherence to collective decisions? Kučan has already talked of the right of minorities in the party to hold different views. But are such minorities to be constituted only on a single-republic basis? Has not this concept led Slovene and other members of the LCY central committee repeatedly to vote for measures in Kosovo that had no support in the Albanian population?⁷⁸ The current crisis has manifestly led to strong internal differentiation within the LCY, and the time has come to recognize this openly. The debate on a comprehensive political reform is already under way in Yugoslavia: central to it will be democratization of the internal life of the LCY, which can have a meaning only if it includes recognition of the right of tendencies to cross republican and provincial borders.

The Ljubljana Declaration emphasizes the need for Yugoslavia to become a 'legal state': that is, a state that respects human rights and recognizes political differences as legitimate. It calls for affirmation of the political, economic and cultural autonomy and equality of all nationalities living in Yugoslavia. It demands that legal institutions and existing laws be altered only by democratic means, with the full agreement of all those concerned.

⁷⁷ The arrests of Azem Vllasi, the managers of the Trepča metallurgical complex, the managers of the Elektrokosovo power plant, the provincial president of the Socialist Youth Alliance and other political and economic leaders of the province on trumped up charges are without precedent in post-war Yugoslavia.

⁷⁸ To break with this practice would require rejection of the official line that counter-revolution is taking place in Kosovo and lead to a sober and principled re-examination of the status of the Albanian nation in Yugoslavia, of the kind attempted by Branko Horvat in *Kosovsko pitanje*, Zagreb 1988.

In this it must command the whole-hearted support of all socialist and democratic forces. Democracy in Yugoslavia, though, cannot be contained within the terms of nationhood and citizenship. Only a democracy that is socialist in character can preserve and build on the gains of the revolution, withstanding nationalism within and capitalist rapacity without. The *common* interests of the Yugoslav working class have been the foundation of the postwar state, and the only guarantee of national equality within it.

Why, therefore, should anyone assume that Milošević represents the interests of Serbia's workers? Why should one assume that the nationalist gamble in Serbia has paid off in its intention to divert class dissatisfaction into more obedient channels? In Serbia, as elsewhere in Yugoslavia, the working class is in fact engaged in increasingly coordinated strike action. The number of strikes is rising, the number of participants is growing, the actions last longer and are better organized. Although they above all seek economic justice, political demands too are increasingly being articulated. 'We are entering the period of organized class struggle. The working class is beginning to build up its own cadre, which does not belong to the bureaucracy, speaks the workers' language and learns quickly from the experience of other workers.'⁹⁹ Will it not also learn from the recent action of the Kosovo workers?

Of course, when—in Serbia today as much as in Romania, or in the Soviet Union under Stalin—there is no democratic possibility for the expression of political views different from official ones, gauging political consciousness accurately is impossible. We may be pretty sure that the Ceaușescu regime is highly unpopular among Romanian workers; or that Stalin's in the period between, say, 1927 and 1935 enjoyed a not negligible degree of working-class support in parts of the country; or that some Chinese workers were enthused by the Cultural Revolution, while others were repelled. But these are all hypotheses and socialists have to judge the regimes in question by quite other criteria. There seems little doubt, from the tenor of the rallies organized by the Serbian party in the last two years, that many workers have indeed been mobilized behind the nationalist banner. And many workers in Vojvodina and Montenegro have certainly been ready, for their own reasons, to demonstrate against their local bureaucrats—thus serving Milošević's very different ends. But what does this prove?

The incidence of strikes in Serbia shows that the Serb nation is by no means as homogeneous as the nationalists claim and that, unlike in Stalin's Soviet Union or Ceaușescu's Romania, there are still social constraints on the authoritarian project of the central party leader. After all, it is against Serbian workers that Milošević's strong state must eventually be used, after the Albanian workers or Slovene democrats who should be their best allies against neo-Stalinism have been crushed. Milošević, it is true, has sometimes struck a demagogically anti-bureaucratic note—but only to incite the replacement of one group of leaders by another, more compliant. The essential logic of his project is the construction in Yugoslavia of a bureaucratic dictatorship under a single leader.

⁹⁹ Mladen Zuvela, member of the Croatian party leadership, *NIN*, Belgrade, 25 December 1989

There are some signs that the liberal wings of the party and the intelligentsia are finally making efforts to come together on an all-Yugoslav basis to resist the neo-Stalinist resurgence.⁶⁰ Nationalist mobilization divides the Serbian working class from workers and progressive forces in other parts of the country, leaving them to confront alone the growing social misery⁶¹ and the enhanced power of the local bureaucracy. Yugoslavia's leaders, though bitterly divided on many issues, share a commitment to a market economy that will above all hit workers in the underdeveloped south. Whereas a democratically planned economy is not achievable within the existing socio-political order, it is equally evident that without a Federal plan to check the destructive effects of the market the national and class compact that gave birth to the postwar state will simply collapse. Such a Federal plan is a condition of Yugoslav unity—no successful challenge to bureaucratic-nationalist reaction can be mounted unless it speaks on behalf of Yugoslavia as a whole.

The imposition of an undemocratic constitution on the Albanian population in March 1989 could, in the end, be effected only by a recourse to force which—despite the eventual coerced acquiescence of the provincial assembly—denies all legitimacy to the act, while simultaneously threatening the national and democratic rights of all Yugoslavs. Albanian workers and intellectuals have done all they could to avoid violence and bloodshed—the former by sticking to peaceful methods of struggle, the latter by their last-minute desperate appeals to reason and justice.⁶² Responsibility for the loss of at least twenty-nine lives within days of this act thus rests exclusively with the federal leadership. Equally, the edict issued to Albanian workers to return to work on pain of dismissal and imprisonment recalls Reaganite methods of dealing with recalcitrant workers; it represents a direct attack on the all-Yugoslav working class, which is soon to be called upon to bear the burden of the restructuring of the economy. The legitimacy of the post-war state, however, was built at once upon national equality and working-class sovereignty: no programme of recovery can avoid addressing itself to both national and class constituencies. The existing institutions are proving increasingly incapable of expressing and resolving the contradictions of the established order. The battle has already been joined for their transformation; its outcome will be determined by the strength of the confiding social forces and their allies, both within and outside Yugoslavia's borders.

⁶⁰ This growing body ranges from people like Koča Popović—a leading partisan general and poet once Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister, who has publicly condemned nationalism and anti-Albanian revanchism in Serbia—to the recently formed Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, which has called for Kosovo's status to be determined by a referendum of its inhabitants.

⁶¹ It is estimated that 38 per cent of workers in Serbia proper do not earn enough to satisfy their basic needs. *NIN*, Belgrade, 25 December 1988.

⁶² For the appeal, signed by 215 Kosovo intellectuals, see *Borba*, 23 February 1989.

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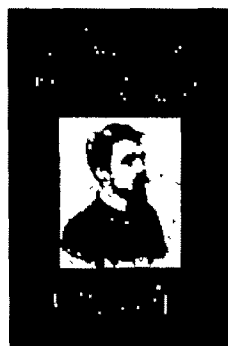
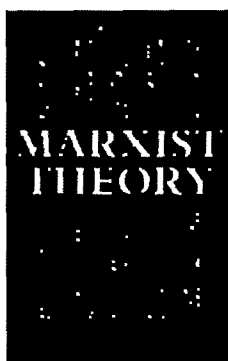
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The Cost of Neo-Liberal Europe

Throughout the present decade, neo-liberal economic strategies—interacting with intense competitive pressures on world markets—have sought to remodel the capitalisms of Western Europe.* In the context of mass unemployment the drive towards a renewed subordination of workforces has found unity and direction in the demand for *labour flexibility*, while deregulation, trade union reform, tax reductions, have worked to widen the field of action for business enterprises, now revalued socially and culturally to become not only indispensable instruments of economic progress but even privileged sources of value and meaning.¹ The culmination of this neo-liberal advance is surely the European Community's project to complete a *single market* in the twelve member states by the magical date of 1992. In concrete administrative terms, market completion brings a series of some three hundred detailed directives aimed at levelling the legal, technical and fiscal barriers to thoroughgoing competition on a continental scale.² Though most of these measures seem dry and bureaucratic in themselves, their cumulative impact will be a major liberalization of economic activity. In

most cases, the intention is not to substitute Community versions for existing national regulatory systems but merely to outlaw any impact of the latter on the free movement of commodities, services and factors of production: a veritable 'bonfire of controls' which will eclipse the minor relaxations first covered by that slogan.

Politically the 'big market' results from the capture by neo-liberal forces of the integration process in Western Europe. Only ten years ago a quite different content could be imagined for the developing Community, in, for example, a proposed exercise in indicative planning.³ Today, integration means only the unification of national markets, with other definitions of cooperation and interaction either displaced by the neo-liberal formula or subordinated to it. Although the programme of directives to eliminate 'barriers' is as yet hardly begun, its potential is being eagerly anticipated in a wave of trans-European mergers and capital restructuring aimed at partitioning and stabilizing the new economic space. Formidable new interests are being constructed to shape future Europe-wide regimes in television, telecommunications, aviation and financial intermediation of all kinds, to redistribute market shares in sectors from confectionery and food processing to publishing and computers.

A widening gap seems to separate labour movements and democratic forces from any purchase over the economic and political processes at work. In the advanced democracies of Norway, Austria and Sweden, once content to trade with EC member countries while preserving nationally demarcated social and political systems, the costs of exclusion from the big market are being anxiously recalculated, while in the member states themselves an atmosphere of obsolescence surrounds previous national strategies for control and intervention in large-scale industry. It is hard even to recall today, for example, the aspirations of the French Socialist-Communist coalition of 1981-83 which, deploying all the economic instruments available to the nation state, offered not a change *in* but a change *of* society. The market completion programme at the same time accelerates the dissolution of national economies as distinct objects of control, thus excluding any repetition of the French experiment, and redefines the European Community in purely market terms as a huge field for the free play of private interests, increasingly open to global trade and investment flows and only minimally supervised by the tiny apparatus of the EC Commission.

Yet in spite of its extravagant presentation on the hoardings ('Are You Ready for 1992?', 'Europe is Open for Business!'; 'You Can't Risk Missing This One!') the big market, while monopolizing the attention given to European affairs, fails to arouse the interest or enthusiasm one might expect for such a vast undertaking. What will be the concrete

* This article is a slightly revised version of a paper presented to the International Conference on Regulation Theory, in Barcelona, in June 1988.

¹ See R. Boyer, ed., *La Flexibilité du travail en Europe*, Paris 1986; B. Cassen, 'Un Nouveau maître à penser. L'entreprise', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 1987.

² For an official view, P. Cecchini, *The European Challenge. 1992: The Benefits of a Single Market*, Wildwood House, Aldershot 1988.

³ EC Commission, 'The Challenges Ahead—A Plan for Europe', *European Perspectives Series*, Brussels 1979.

results, the changes in everyday life, produced by this thorough reorganization of markets and rules of competition? There is, in fact, a remarkable disproportion between the immense scale of the programme, surely the most ambitious practical expression yet of neo-liberalism, and the paucity of the results expected even by its advocates. The most important economic problem of the member states—the persistence over a decade of unprecedented levels of unemployment (currently 16.6 million in the EC)—will hardly be affected by the programme. Even the inflated guesstimates of the Cecchini Report⁴—greeted by unanimous professional derision—offer only limited relief. The big market crowns the neo-liberal dominance of European policy formation but confirms the inability of neo-liberalism to master the central problem in Europe's economic and social life. By 1992, then, a greater or lesser number of the three hundred directives will have come into force. (The stubborn resistance of entrenched producer interests is in fact delaying some of the most significant of the proposed liberalizations.) But, in advance, it is accepted that in 1992 or afterwards the achievement of the legislative programme, although it may bring some benefits to consumers, will not translate into any radical improvement in economic security or employment opportunities for the populations of the Community.

Is it possible to discern, through the approaching disappointments of post-1992 Europe, a more effective agenda for European recovery, based upon a deeper and more adequate account of the Community's malaise than that provided by contemporary versions of Benthamite economic analysis? Below, we attempt to assess the Community's present situation, not measured against the norm of general competitive equilibrium, but in terms of the concepts proposed by the theory of capitalist regulation.⁵ We interpret the theory widely, not as a variant of Marxist economic doctrine but as a continuing effort to synthesize a coherent critical account of advanced capitalist systems which draws on all the theoretical sources available—Marxism, Keynesian and post-Keynesian economic analysis, structuralist and other critical social theory—and attempts to embody the most fertile hypotheses on the meaning and direction of present economic upheavals. Since the publication of the regulation school's inaugural texts (the most influential, Aglietta's account of US capitalism, being itself a dazzling work of synthesis), regulation theory has become increasingly diverse, even divergent.⁶ But the productivity and openness of the writers involved and a commitment to overall theoretical coherence, have made their cumulative work perhaps the most effective challenge to the present dominance of free-market economic doctrines. Thus it seems useful to examine the process of European economic integration in the light of this developing body of theory. Our aim is not the immediate production of a policy agenda, but merely a critical assessment of present policies which could help clear the way for that task.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ For recent surveys of the regulation approach, see M. De Vroey, 'A Regulation Approach Interpretation of the Contemporary Crisis', *Capital and Class*, no. 23, 1984, R. Jessop, 'Regulation Theory, Post-Fordism and the State', *Capital and Class*, no. 34, 1988

⁶ The seminal text is M. Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: the US Experience*, New Left Books, London 1979. The origins of the regulation school are discussed in A. Lipietz, 'Accumulation et Crises. Quelques réflexions méthodologiques autour de la notion de régulation', mimeo, CEPREMAP, Paris 1984

Models of European Development

According to the neo-liberal analyses that have, over the last fifteen years, displaced the conservative variant of Keynesianism which previously dominated policy formation, Western Europe's economic malaise results from a lack of structural adaptation. Thus far, but no further, their case might be accepted both by the proponents of regulation theory and by other heterodox commentators. Neo-liberal theory, however, proceeds to identify the desired structural renovation with the tendential outcome of a process of generalized market competition. Almost tautologically, it is then asserted that persistent structural inadequacies must derive from rigidities in market adjustment and barriers to free competition.⁷ Considered in abstract terms, the argument is not implausible. It even seems to echo some of the Marxist accounts of the Depression of the thirties, which interpreted the unprecedented duration of that crisis in terms of a blocked competitive mechanism, and thus the inability of new and dynamic enterprises to supplant their older, inefficient rivals.

The neo-liberal case begins to meet difficulties when one asks for concrete examples of the rigidities and barriers in question. A decade ago, ready targets were available: Keynesian interventionism, which refinanced loss-making industry rather than accept its supersession by new enterprise; over-mighty unions, imposing disabling constraints on the use of labour; high tax rates and bloated welfare budgets, which dammed the sources of individual motivation. The extreme case of Britain shows, however, that as each of these dragons is slain in the unchecked advance of free-market conservatism, the path to a renewed economic dynamic is not cleared. In the absence of a critical return to the premises of the neo-liberal agenda, the net has to be cast more and more widely, in the search for the market rigidities whose existence is given *a priori*. No element of state or civil society escapes assault as a version of totalitarianism appears in the refusal to recognize any limits to the drive for market-led economic reconstruction. If the mere decline of the labour movement does not secure a revival of entrepreneurial dynamism, then the obstacles must be sought in the health service, the educational system, indeed in the resistances of an archaic national culture. The very success of neo-liberalism in contemporary Europe, above all in Britain, forces it closer to this dilemma: either a frenzied *faits-en-avant*, to raze every obstructive contour of the social landscape, or a critical revision of its metaphysical premises.

How do the theory of regulation and its analogues contest this 'totalizing' vision?⁸ The theory begins with a critical denial—the continuity of market relations is *in no way* a spontaneous process. Contrary to a simplistic reading of Marx, the absence of direct political subordination within the economic sphere does not mean that it is reproduced automatically. The famous schemas only illustrate a possibility of balanced accumulation. How is that possibility actualized? The answer of regulationist theory is in terms of *structural forms*, an ensemble of institutions, conventions and

⁷ The most elaborate account of the political economy of neo-liberalism is perhaps M. Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*, although Olson's version is uncharacteristically free from extremism.

⁸ Aglietta, *op cit*, p. 10.

norms which constitute the *mode of regulation*. Markets are clearly a pervasive feature of this ensemble, but they can only direct economic agents when they are structured in such a way as to limit uncertainty, channel social conflict, avoid dislocative losses for important agents, define directions of expansion, sustain macro-economic stability. Cumulative economic advance thus requires a coherent mode of regulation able to release the potential of the underlying types of productive organization. For present purposes it is not necessary to elaborate in detail the articulation between structural forms in overall economic reproduction⁹—in any case, different conceptual orderings are possible and the articulation itself is subject to historical change. We will only signal, for illustrative purposes, some of the central regulatory elements of the 'Fordist' or 'Monopolistic' growth model which is seen, in a range of nationally specific variants, as having governed the 'golden age' of European expansion from the late forties to the early seventies.

The paradigmatic productive unit, then, was the Fordist factory, where standardized consumer goods were mass-produced by semi-skilled operatives subject to detailed Taylorist supervision. The trajectory of advance was to raise output per worker through progressive mechanization and an ever more detailed sub-division of labour along the assembly lines. The structural forms consistent with this 'intensive' accumulation (i.e., accumulation dependent on the growth of mass domestic markets) included the *productivity bargain*, paradigmatically the bargain struck between large-scale manufacturing employers and the unions organizing semi-skilled manual workers in the same sectors; *oligopolistic price leadership* which, with *accelerated depreciation*, shielded the largest companies from drastic devaluation of their investments; social welfare systems providing basic *income maintenance* for a proletariat now totally dependent on monetized exchange for its own reproduction; mass *consumer credit* to stabilize demand for the key durables; Keynesian *demand management* which guaranteed the high sales volumes needed to maintain profitability while being itself sustained by the dynamic response of productivity to output growth which, in the golden age at least, gave such policies a developmental significance beyond short-run stabilization. Thus Coriat sees Frederick Taylor, Henry Ford and John Maynard Keynes as a closely united triumvirate inventing the economic mechanisms of modern times.¹⁰

Such, in highly stylized form, was the growth model we have lost.¹¹ Regulation theory momentarily coincides with neo-liberalism in recognizing the obsolescence of Keynesian and Fordist structural forms. But it diverges immediately by interpreting the attrition of these forms, not as liberation of an idealized 'flexible' economy from the constraints which suppressed it, but as the beginning of a long, painful and contradictory transition towards a new model of development, constructed around a radically different but equally necessary mode of regulation. From this point of view,

⁹ Lipietz, op. cit.

¹⁰ B. Coriat, *L'atelier et le chronomètre*, Paris 1979.

¹¹ For a thorough empirical study of the 'long boom' of Fordism and its crisis, see A. Glyn, A. Hughes, A. Lipietz, A. Singh, 'The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age', mimeo, Cambridge, Department of Applied Economics, 1988.

full realization of the neo-liberal agenda could only mean a descent into an anomic disarray of mutually self-cancelling private initiatives, since markets in themselves (abstracted from structuring norms and institutions) do not constitute an adequate organizational principle for a decentralized exchange economy.

The renewal and replacement of structural forms, in a mode of regulation consistent with productive possibilities, in the widest sense, which have been transformed not only technically, but also ecologically and historically—this defines the vast research agenda proposed by the regulationist approach—the need for a more differentiated assessment of restructuring processes. Pioneering Marxist analyses of big capital's response to the crisis have identified some of the key shifts taking place,¹² but they have given too homogeneous an account of restructuring, and even tended to assume that the labour-shedding or relocation strategies adopted by the dominant enterprises in themselves suffice to restore the possibility of sustained accumulation. David Gordon¹³ has recently pointed to the limits of this view, which tends to a certain fundamentalism: capitalist restructuring is taken as a relatively superficial adaptation, 'structures' being rather pliantly modified around an invariant core system.¹⁴ Regulationist theory points rather to the centrality and the difficulties of structural change, since the structural forms on which it insists are not in the control of even the largest enterprises but are still essential for effective market coordination. In the anomic situation which follows the crisis of Fordist accumulation, the adaptations of big capital will not represent roughly monotonic approximations to a new overall balance. We would rather expect, on the one hand, the pursuit of conflicting strategies by different enterprises—thus 'neo-Fordism' attempts to unblock the previous path of accumulation while 'post-Fordism' seeks a more radical reshaping of production relations within and among enterprises. On the other hand, many aspects of enterprise behaviour can be interpreted only as defensive reactions to the volatility and anomie which prevail in the absence of a socially defined development model¹⁵—a preoccupation with financial liquidity, attempts to transfer risks to employees or other firms, a heavy bias away from product innovation towards cost-reducing process innovations. Such adaptations are symptoms of malaise and uncertainty, rather than adequate responses; nevertheless, they frequently determine the outcome of spontaneous market processes. Thus the enormous productive possibilities of West European economies may be impeded by institutional confusion and undefined perspectives, rather than thwarted by barriers to free exchange. From this point of view, how can we assess the current policies of the EC and the process of integration?

¹² The outstanding example being P. Frobel, J. Heinrichs and O. Kreye, *The New International Division of Labour*, Cambridge, 1980.

¹³ D. Gordon, 'The Global Economy: New Edifice or Crumbling Foundations', *New Left Review* 168, 1988.

¹⁴ For example, J. Kolkko, *Restructuring the World Economy*, Toronto 1988.

¹⁵ For this distinction in the case of the labour market, see R. Boyer, 'Labour Flexibility. Many Forms, Uncertain Effects', *Labour and Society*, vol. 12, No. 1, 1987.

The Big Market

The centrality of the 1992 programme to present visions of European integration is, first of all, a political fact. The agenda of the Community has been set by the governments in power in Britain, Germany and, until May of last year, France. From the large number of possible futures for European construction, neo-liberalism has chosen the one compatible with its own projects—the intensification of competition, the elimination of controls on business activity. In purely political terms, the basis for this choice of path towards integration seems somewhat fragile. Northern European representatives in the Council of Ministers were the key force involved. In the European Parliament and the Commission, majorities probably exist for a much wider, less market-oriented range of initiatives, while the low-income countries of Southern Europe, where there is a lot to lose and little to gain from more intense foreign competition, would welcome any revival of interventionist, redistributional or expansionist themes in Community economic policy. The Single European Act, recently adopted by member-state parliaments as an extension of the Treaty of Rome, provides a legal foundation for a wide range of policies. Right-wing governments narrowed, but failed to vitiate altogether, the scope of this revision. And the conservative northern bloc itself is perhaps less than fanatical for market completion—its influence has rather been expressed in the sullen rejection of alternative projects, those which might cost money or place constraint on the salutary activities of the business class. Mrs Thatcher's speech at Bruges last October suggests that she realizes that the political alignments which, for the moment, control the Community's development are precarious. She did not emphasize the benefits of the present direction so much as warn of the dangers of other paths.

But the social and intellectual climate also furthered the programme: liberalization of markets does address the felt needs of many economic agents, including some of the largest and most powerful enterprises; while there is an air of obsolescence about some of the other proposals for European cooperation. Projects for a Europe-wide Keynesian expansion or for highly interventionist industrial policies at community level have carried little conviction: such exercises met with little success in the late seventies and early eighties. From the present point of view we could regard them as efforts to revive the Fordist model of accumulation. Thus neo-liberal strategies have prevailed. In the circumstances the 1992 programme can even be seen as a tribute to the strength of the European movement, its ability to renew the dynamic of the integration process by recurrently redefining its content.

The tactical brilliance of the market completion programme, laid out in Lord Cockfield's White Paper of 1985,¹⁶ is to bypass wherever possible the need for common supervisory procedures and harmonized standards to replace the inconsistent systems of the nation states. Complex negotiations towards a European system can thus be dispensed with. Instead there will be a simple agreement by member governments to recognize

¹⁶ Commission of the EC, *White Paper on Completing the Internal Market*, Brussels 1985.

each other's supervisory practices. A Commission report,⁷ making a virtue of necessity, even claims the superiority of this new, more ready, way of integrating markets which will stimulate a healthy rivalry between the various national systems of consumer protection and so on. This 'mutual recognition' approach has therefore a liberalizing tendency, even beyond the stimulus it gives to intra-Community competition, since it is difficult to see how the least controlled producers can fail to enjoy an advantage over those subject to closer supervision. This aspect of the programme embodies the *Zeitgeist* in that it automatically tends to weaken the legal and administrative controls which are supposed, although without any serious evidence, to be crippling the corporate sector.

Directives to remove official 'non-tariff' barriers and to promote intra-community competition are being enacted for a host of sectors and activities. Symbolically, the consummation of the programme will be an assault on 'physical barriers', that is, the abolition of administrative formalities at the frontiers between member states and even the removal of passport controls (if the police will permit—Britain's Home Secretary has already voiced his anxiety on this score). Economically, the two most important issues are the drive to open up public procurement and the integration of credit and finance. As the purchases of national governments, previously a protectionist fief within each member state, are put out to tender in the Community as a whole, international combines and consortia are already forming in the most affected sectors. In Euro-speak this is known as 'seizing the opportunities of 1992'; in reality, it is a matter of pooling the quite unacceptable risks of unstructured competition (unacceptable, that is, to entrepreneurs). Financial integration has, as a necessary condition, free capital movement throughout the EC. Those with most to gain are British and US credit institutions, but formidable problems of control and stabilization arise.

Research sponsored by the Commission into the benefits of market competition have already elicited a sceptical response to their 'think of a number, double it' methodology. The forced optimism is often quite transparent. 'There is the issue,' concedes one of the reports, 'of whether the "equilibrium" postulate that all resources released in rationalization would be re-employed, is realistic. Undoubtedly it is only a matter of time before such resources are effectively re-employed.'⁸ It is noticeable that all the postulated benefits arise from cost reduction and rationalizations within the enlarged markets; no principle of development towards new or enhanced productive activities is detected. Thus the programme is seen, even by its proponents, as an intensification of the purgative strategies which have already so clearly failed, over nearly a decade, to restore the lost dynamism of the European economies. But the full measure of the programme's idealism has as yet hardly been grasped even by its critics. The adequacy of market competition for the proposed tasks of integration is taken for granted by both sides. In reality, nothing is less certain. This can be brought out by considering the notion of an enlarged

⁷ T. Padoa-Schioppa, *Efficiency, Stability and Equity: A Strategy for the Evaluation of the Economic System of the EC*, Oxford 1987

⁸ EC Commission, 'The Economics of 1992', *European Economy*, No. 35, 1988, p. 56

'home market'. This is a long-standing objective in the Community, a unified, continent-wide economic space to rival that of the United States: discussions of 1992 imply, quite erroneously, that an assault on trade barriers can construct this space. Thus, the specified administrative measures should, by 1992, make France a home market for British producers. To believe any such thing one has to focus on market processes to the exclusion of the societies in which they occur.

A key development in contemporary economics has been to begin the theoretical examination of genuinely decentralized markets, those where limited information and high transaction costs exclude the consideration of all feasible exchanges.¹⁹ Most real-world markets, for producer and consumer goods and for labour, are of this type and therefore cannot display the self-equilibrating behaviour of the text-books. Standard economic theories usually assume that all market agents enjoy full information, a condition which is only met in practice (and even then only approximately) by highly institutionalized and centralized markets, such as organized commodity exchanges. Truly decentralized markets have enormous organizational plasticity, just because they are not institutionalized in this way, but they can be shown not to equate total demand and supply or to establish consistent prices with the fluency of the centralized 'auction' markets.

Much economic reasoning, and certainly most theories of economic integration, assimilate the decentralized markets found in reality to the full-information, centralized structures of the text-books, a procedure which, depending on circumstances, may be a simple analytical device or a thoroughly apologetic obfuscation of the economic processes involved, since what can result is a view of market exchange as spontaneously self-adjusting. In fact, an external element is always necessary to give full account of transactions behaviour—either the clearing institution of the centralized exchange, or a less compact but still indispensable network of social relations in the decentralized case. (It is at this point that the pure theory of 'transaction costs' starts to rejoin the main lines of regulation theory.²⁰)

The theories and models usually applied to the 'big market' replicate neo-liberal ideology by neglecting the real impact of decentralized structures on the process of exchange and thus assuming the adequacy of competitive processes alone to produce economic integration. Hence the absurd, obsessive search for administrative and legal 'barriers' and 'rigidities' to explain the survival of distinct national markets within the customs union set up by the EC—as if the sphere of market relations must lead to completely homogeneous economic outcomes in the absence of external obstructions. Of course the simple truth is the opposite—the survival of distinct French and British national economies is due not to 'non-tariff

¹⁹ An outstanding example is A. Okun, *Prices and Quantities: A Macroeconomic Analysis*, Brookings, Washington, D.C., 1981.

²⁰ M. Piore, 'Historical Perspectives and the Interpretation of Unemployment', *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1987. Piore points out that there are similarities between the long-term contracts often found in decentralized markets and institutions. One could add that the 'implicit' or informal contracts also used to limit transactions costs resemble norms or conventions.

barriers' but to the massive dependence of private economic behaviour on the social relations which underlie the patterns of decentralized exchange. To integrate two institutionalized commodity markets—say for copper or tin—one needs little more than a telephone wire. The integration of French and British markets for complex goods and services will be a task hardly begun even when every identifiable non-tariff barrier in the Cockfield agenda has been brought low, the reason being that these cannot be fully integrated, centralized national markets to begin with.

Thus integration on a European scale, where it is achieved, is never the result of market competition but rather of the continental dominance of a few huge enterprises whose internal organization embraces all the countries—this is already the case for cars and some other consumer durables, for example. In such cases, however, it is widely recognized that the process is less one of European integration than of the *globalization* of Europe's economic life: the 1992 programme, if it cannot integrate the decentralized structures of national economies, does imply a massive further opening of European economic spaces to US and Japanese enterprises in those sectors where a few companies can dominate the scene. This was already the case for many manufactured goods; it will now tend to become so for capital- or technology-intensive services, thus conceding an important US demand for improved access to the EC's banking and financial sectors.

If the possible gains from the 1992 programme, and its contribution to economic integration, are thus misunderstood, the damage it can cause has also been minimized. It is not simply a matter of diluting consumer protection or other controls on business. As with most items in the neo-liberal economic agenda, 1992 is an exercise in rationalizing and cost-cutting. It thus threatens to exacerbate the existing bias of European industry away from expansion and development, towards forms of competition in which defensive strategies prevail. Official studies recognize that the putative gains will be squeezed out of losing enterprises through the compression of 'economic rents'.²¹ In such a climate preoccupation with survival and its concomitants—avoidance of long-term investment, pressure on employees and on suppliers—will continue to intensify the present economic malaise. To the extent that the existing social framework of economic activity is dismantled at national level, the environment for enterprises will become more anomic and uncertain. The market completion programme thus fails to contribute to the emergence of a European model of development but at the same time raises the cost of its absence.

The Ecu, the D-mark and the Dollar

While the drive to 1992 and the European free-enterprise zone monopolizes the energy and attention of policy-makers, other aspects of European construction are blocked. In the crucial sphere of monetary cooperation, the institutions envisaged a decade ago have been delayed and the immobilism of the British and German governments has perpetuated the existing EMS—a half-measure which barely modifies the direct exercise of German hegemony while presenting it as a form of international cooperation.

²¹ *European Economy*, op cit.

The result has been to intensify the deflationary effects of imbalances in trade between European countries. At the same time, no European challenge has been possible to the global dominance of US finance, an archaic and unstable network of relations which has already imposed huge costs on European and global economic development

From the perspective of regulation theory, the monetary and financial disturbances of the last two decades also have their origin in the crisis of Fordist production relations. The existence of a well-functioning growth model makes for monetary stability as it sustains the value of productive assets and limits the risks of investment.²² As growing problems of productivity, first in the US and then internationally, undermined the Fordist model, enormous system-wide uncertainties reacted on the credit system, raising interest rates, exacerbating the volatility of asset markets, obstructing the flow of investment finance to industry. Given the atomized and competitive character of the globally dominant US system of banking and finance, effective public control has proved impossible.²³ Indeed, the US authorities have at times even exploited those disorders of money and credit so as to compensate, in the financial sphere, for their progressive loss of industrial dominance. The consequent disturbances start with the dismantling of the Bretton Woods exchange-rate regime under Richard Nixon; continue with rapid dollar-depreciation and inflationary pressure through the seventies and the 'Volcker Shock' of 1980-82, when a violent turn to monetary restriction forced fiscal contraction on all governments outside the US and intensified global recession while leaving a legacy of unpaid and unpayable international debt; and culminated with the Reagan boom, sustained first by a huge wave of speculation in the rising dollar, then by massive official intervention by Japanese and European central banks to brake its inevitable fall.

The EMS was originally conceived as a step towards reform and reconstruction of the dislocated system of finance and payments. It remains, however, a mere 'island of stability' in the continuing global turbulence of dollar-dominated finance, since the system is without any instrument to influence the external monetary relations of the member countries.²⁴ The states participating in the exchange-rate mechanism of the EMS have to agree on stable exchange ratios between their currencies and coordinate monetary policies in defence of the agreed rates while continuing to pursue completely free and uncoordinated policies in relation to currencies outside the system. FECOM, the system's provisional supervisory body, thus orchestrates the defence of agreed parities between the Ecu (European Currency Unit, the EC unit of account) and the national currencies while being impotent to affect the Ecu's value in terms of dollars or Yen.

In practice the external value of the Ecu is determined unilaterally by the external value of the strongest currency in the system, the D-mark. The dollar value of the Ecu is set in Frankfurt, while the French, Italian and

²² M. Aglietta and A. Orléan, *La Violence de la monnaie*, Paris 1982, p. 85.

²³ See J. Grahl, 'Productivity Slowdown and Financial Tensions', *Thames Papers in Political Economy*, 1986

²⁴ For details of the EMS, see J. Ypersele, *The European Monetary System*, EC Commission, Brussels 1986

other authorities have simply to accept the resulting dollar-value of their own currencies as the price for parity stabilization within the Community. Thus the forms of concertation and agreement in this half-system do not make it, in substance, much more than a D-mark zone, although some technical concessions by Germany were made when the EMS replaced the previous arrangement ('the Snake').

Now, the external objectives of German and thus EC monetary policy are minimal. There is little ambition to restrict the global role of the dollar and little will to challenge the asymmetrical freedom of policy action which the US authorities must continue to enjoy so long as the dollar remains the main international reserve asset and investment medium. The Bundesbank, indeed, continues to sustain the dollar by colossal intervention on the foreign exchanges, even though the US recognizes no reciprocal responsibility. Bonn has sought merely to protect Germany's intra-European trade from the worst dangers of dollar instability. Violent appreciations and depreciation of the mark against the dollar continue to result from unpredictable switches of US policy and ungovernable swings of sentiment among private wealth-holders in the context of deregulated international finance. But the EMS exchange-rate system limits the impact of these disturbances on West Germany's trade with its European neighbours by constraining all their currencies to move together against the dollar. Thus the actual EMS has more the effect of making world monetary relations compatible with German interests, than of reconstructing them towards a new stability and reciprocity.

The founding documents of the EMS in fact envisaged a rapid move beyond the exchange-rate mechanism to an 'institutional phase'. This would have established an EMF (European Monetary Fund), which could then have operated an effective external policy by exercising a measure of central control over the dollar and gold reserves of member countries. Since German resistance has so far postponed the EMF, the non-German participants in the EMS (France, Italy, Benelux, Denmark, Ireland) are in fact subjected to a double hegemony—their external monetary policies are determined immediately in the Bundesrepublik, while Bonn's conservative stance perpetuates the global dominance of the US financial system and the instability which it generates. The EMS participants have, of course, derived benefits from its successful stabilization of exchange rates, which shields their own competitiveness in Europe from drastic financial disturbances. But they also pay a price in the tight constraints which EMS discipline imposes on their domestic credit policies. These constraints have already had major effects for France and Italy, which, in endeavouring to maintain their competitiveness, try to match, in unfavourable conditions, the formidable German record of near-total disinflation.

The Effects of Monetary Regimes

It is an achievement of the regulation school to have shed light on the costs of such constraints, whereas orthodox economic theory has denied (on doctrinal not empirical grounds) that a change of monetary regime has any long-term effects. Such positions either abstract from monetary relations altogether or consider only highly aggregate effects. In the accounts given by Lipietz or Aglietta and Orlean, monetary policies have

massive and permanent real consequences since they determine when, to what extent, and in which sectors, deficit economic units will be refinanced.²⁵ Thus monetary regimes are closely interlocked with the agreements made between workers and employers, since they narrowly determine the scope for these and other social compromises. Aglietta and Orlean argue that inflationary regimes, tending to socialize losses and shield debtor sectors from drastic restructuring at the hands of private creditors, have a *centralizing* function in that they encourage types of economic adaptation which avoid the severing of established exchange relations. Hence the near-universal adoption of inflationary regimes in developing countries whose economic coherence is fragile, while decentralizing deflationary strategies are most advantageous in economies whose cohesion is firmly underpinned by a rich and close network of private economic relationships. From this point of view the weaker economies of Europe, especially low-income Mediterranean countries, could pay a high price indeed for loss of monetary autonomy and enforced alignment with the restrictive policies of West Germany.

The 1992 programme, however, is driving towards just such a loss of autonomy, even in countries such as Greece and Portugal which have not been able to participate in the EMS. A unified market in 'financial services' requires the free circulation of money and capital among member countries and thus makes nationally differentiated credit policies impossible. For countries participating in the EMS the strains of financial integration and loss of control over interest rates will drastically intensify the problems of maintaining fixed parities against the D-mark, since they will be unable to make effective use of interest rates to counter monetary outflows.²⁶ They will either have to restrict other policies in order to compensate for the blunting of the interest-rate weapon or accept wider ranges of exchange-rate fluctuation and more frequent realignments. Thus the market integration programme carries a major threat of monetary *dismintegration*, which can only be avoided by an acceptance of much tighter constraints on domestic policy and thus a narrowing of the scope for growth-oriented class compromise. The deflationary impact of West Germany's persistent balance-of-payments surplus will tend to be seriously aggravated.

An alternative line of development towards monetary integration is available, which would avoid simply intensifying external constraints on the weaker national economies but instead use the enormous combined weight of the EC as a trading bloc to stabilize and reform the international financial system and thus limit the uncertainty and economic myopia produced by the volatility of globalized US finance. This is exactly the path towards the institutional phase of the EMS, with a combination of national reserves and a switch from the D-mark to the Ecu as the key currency within the system. Aglietta's detailed studies of this question indicate that an increasing global role for the Ecu, displacing the dollar over a wide area, would also mitigate the problem of Germany's surplus by relaxing external constraints on all EMS countries whenever their

²⁵ A. Lipietz, *The Enchanted World: Inflation, Credit and the World Crisis*, Verso, London 1985, Aglietta and Orlean, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Padoa-Schioppa, *op. cit.*, ch. 7.

collective trading position with the rest of the world improved.²⁷ German monetary hegemony would obviously not be dissolved by this reform, but it would be institutionally limited and situated in a much more expansionary policy context. Ironically, in blocking such a development the free-market conservative governments of Britain and West Germany have had to oppose spontaneous market developments—private agents have been enthusiastic to make greater use of the Ecu but administrative accommodation of this trend has been refused.

The EC Commission made skilful use of the impetus of the 1992 programme itself, to break the long-standing immobilism of monetary institutions. The European Council at Hanover in June 1988 set up a committee to make proposals for a Community central bank, although the committee's composition—heads of national central banks plus a few experts—hardly promises a radical set of recommendations. Meanwhile, financial integration along neo-liberal lines—freedom for private capital movements, before or even without the construction of common institutions—proceeds apace: full liberalization comes into effect in July 1990, with temporary derogations for the four poorest countries. So far, not even minimal procedures to prevent fraud have been agreed to accompany this measure. Thus the imbalance is still growing between the interdependence produced by private investment flows and tardy cooperation in the public sphere, where the British and FRG governments will continue to resist any ambitious institutional projects.

The motives behind this resistance are different in the two cases. Bonn seems to fear above all a loss of its own monetary sovereignty and a potentially inflationary 'politicization' of the European monetary regime. Thus German spokesmen insist that any EMS be 'independent' of (i.e. not responsible to) the political institutions of the EC. The more radical refusal of monetary cooperation by the British government, which declines even to participate in the existing EMS, is based on the increasing dependence of the British economy on its financial sector. The Thatcher government has gambled heavily on global expansion of the same anarchic US financial networks which have inflicted such damage on real economic development. Repeatedly the British productive structure has been sacrificed to maintain Britain's lucrative brokerage role in deregulated international financial markets. So long as it is guided by this perception of national interests, Britain must remain a fundamental opponent of European monetary cooperation, and its abstention from the EMS has sustained Germany's refusal to reform it. Thus, for different reasons, the strongest right-wing governments in Europe work to perpetuate European monetary weakness and instability. In so doing they encourage the volatility, high risk premia and short-term views of advantage which prevent the effective functioning of market mechanisms.

The Empty Social Space

Just as the market completion programme has displaced the projects of industrial and monetary construction in the EC, so the Community's

²⁷ 'Faire de l'Ecu une monnaie parallèle', in M. Agleita, ed., *L'Ecu et la vieille dame. un lever pour l'Europe*, Paris 1986.

social initiatives have been blocked or marginalized by the same forces—European employers, increasingly reluctant to engage in dialogue with organized labour, and neo-liberal governments, above all the Thatcher regime. Since 1979 British representatives in the Council have consistently opposed any Community attempt to set even minimal norms for the conditions of work or working time. The implications go beyond the field of social welfare and involve the questions of unemployment and economic recovery. A new model of European economic development, like the Fordist models of the past, can only be defined by structural forms constructed outside the sphere of commodity exchange, supported in political and social norms and agreements. Thus, the Fordist phase of accumulation depended on patterns of collective bargaining which turned competition away from the lowering of wage costs towards the expansion of output volumes. It depended, similarly, on norms of consumption which were sustained by public housing, road construction and income maintenance by the state.²⁸

Of course, the social contexts of European Fordism were essentially national, as were the corresponding modes of regulation. The past as imagined by neo-liberalism makes the era of European supergrowth a result of its economic integration; chronology suggests the reverse relationship—integration was made possible by the massive success of the national economies which were politically reconstructed in the postwar period. Only towards the end of the 'golden age' did the integration of European markets become an important basis for expanded output volumes and the associated economies of scale.²⁹ Macroeconomic complementarities did develop between the rapid growth of French markets, sustaining the profit levels of German industry, and the impressive German productivity trends which worked to mitigate inflationary pressures in its trading partners.³⁰ But essentially this was an interlocking of national modes of regulation. Early EC initiatives in the social field, aiming at an abstract harmonization of employment norms and participation arrangements, failed to recognize the historically divergent social contexts in which national practices were rooted.

As European stagnation has continued through the eighties, however, policy-makers in the Community's institutions have brought forward more concrete proposals. The aim has not been to effect a tidy harmonization but to respond to the impairment of national social policy instruments caused by continuing economic integration. The proposed reforms were hardly radical—the prevailing ideological climate in the Commission which put them forward was largely set by the Christian Democratic and Social Democratic traditions. All the more extreme has been their rejection by a neo-liberal current which is determined to produce a normless and deregulated European labour market by widening the cracks in national corporatist bargaining structures brought about by economic integration. Thus the Vredeling draft directive on employee consultation

²⁸ Aglietta's analysis of these questions (*Theory of Capitalist Regulation*) draws on J O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, New York 1968.

²⁹ R. Boyer, 'Segmentations ou solidarité, déclin ou redressement quel modèle pour l'Europe?', in *La Flexibilité*, op. cit., p. 221.

³⁰ M. Aglietta, 'World Capitalism in the Eighties', *New Left Review* 136, 1982.

sought less to advance the course of industrial democracy than to avoid the erosion of existing practices through the growth of multi-divisional transnational companies. Employer resistance, stiffened and organized by the British government, has prevented its adoption.

Similarly the 'social space', advocated by EC president Delors as a minimal check on the undermining of labour conditions and national levels of social provision by the big market, has been consistently opposed by the British government.³¹ In an astonishing departure from Community tradition, Britain, using a makeshift alliance with Italy and Ireland, inflicted a direct political defeat on the Commission at the European Council of December 1986. Against the explicit recommendation of the Commission, a new policy document blocked any EC legislation which could affect the labour market, and instead defined labour 'flexibility' as the basis of the Community's employment policy. In particular the document ended, at least temporarily, the Commission's attempt to establish minimal controls on non-standard labour contracts—short-term contracts, sub-contracting to nominally 'self-employed' workers, and so on—which have proliferated in the era of mass unemployment.

Attempting to break out of the constraints imposed by Britain and allied right-wing governments, Delors promoted a dialogue between the European employers' association and the trade unions as a possible basis for social legislation. The 'social partners' would not dance—the employers' representatives at the Val Duchesse talks simply refused to agree to any joint statement if it could be used for legislation. Indeed, the British government rapidly learned to transfer any Commission proposals it disliked to the Val Duchesse discussions, as a way of ensuring their delay. Thus any social control over employment relations at European level is currently blocked, and with it any coherent model of economic development. The patterns of competition which are likely to result are known to the EC's political class as 'social dumping'—that is, competitive struggles based on the erosion of working conditions and levels of social protection. Exactly such competition, with all its destructive and lawless consequences, is the aim of the neo-liberal strategy.

It is difficult to exaggerate the strategic importance of European social policy, however inadequate the Commission's existing proposals may be. The TUC's initiative in inviting President Delors to address last year's Congress thus signals a significant, if belated, shift in consciousness. The other main side of EC social policy—regional development—is hardly in a better state. No direct obstacle has been raised to the elaboration of EC policies in this sphere, which would run directly against the interests of its Mediterranean member states, but actual initiatives remain at a token level because northern governments, Britain and West Germany, above all, starve the Community of funds, setting a derisory budget for the central governing body of the world's strongest economic bloc. Once again, more is at stake than a regional redistribution of income. The Mediterranean basin, both inside and outside the frontiers of the EC, is the only plausible location for rapid economic growth in or near Western Europe

³¹ For a semi-official account of this issue from a Commission point of view, see P. Venturini, 'La Dimension sociale du marché intérieur', *Futuribles*, December 1988.

and could provide an indispensable complement to slower, more qualitative development in the mature northern economies. Only massive and dependable recycling of West Germany's surplus towards growth around the Mediterranean can overcome the impasse of European macroeconomic policy—recycling which could certainly involve private capital flows under effective public supervision but of which fiscal transfers through the EC would be an indispensable component.³² The budgetary minimalism of the German and British governments thus helps to lock the whole Community in a deflationary stance which becomes increasingly dysfunctional as the Reagan boom fades in the USA.³³

The spatial configurations of post-Fordist economic development have been explored by Leborne and Lipietz. They argue that the regional polarizations characteristic of Western Europe in the 'golden age' are an inherent feature of Fordist growth, the geographical expression of its deep separation between conception and execution in the labour process, which impoverishes all economic interactions not involving the isolated centres of control.³⁴ Again, therefore, neo-liberal suppression of any policies which express social and interregional solidarity in the Community tends at the same time to frustrate Western Europe's economic development.

Conclusion

A recent authoritative analysis of European labour markets points out that most workers are over-qualified for the jobs they are doing.³⁵ In this simple observation we can begin to detect the full dimensions of the crisis in Fordist production relations—besides the huge quantitative shortfall in the demand for labour there is also an enormous *qualitative* mismatch between the talents and capacities available and the use that is made of them. The issue is central to the renewal of economic progress in Europe: with the exhaustion of Taylorist modes of work organization, only a full and responsible engagement of workers in their own productive activity can start to release the potential forces for sustained development. The deployment of new technologies, however necessary in the definition of a new development model, is secondary to this reconstruction of social relations. One consequence is a much deeper and more far-reaching employment bargain, since the compensation required for committed, fully responsible productive efforts will tend to go beyond the consumption norms of the Fordist epoch, and involve not only the division of output but the nature of the enterprises in which it is produced, and indeed the objectives of production themselves.

Neo-liberalism refuses this restructured wage relation, even at the cost of

³² For an analysis of the barrier to expansion produced by West Germany's huge trade surplus, see Cambridge Economic Policy Group, *The European Community. Problem and Prospects*, 1982.

³³ A. Lipietz, 'L'Europe, dernier recours pour une relance mondiale', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1988.

³⁴ D. Leborgne and A. Lipietz, 'L'Après-fordisme et son espace', *Les Temps Modernes*, April 1988.

³⁵ R. Lindley, *New Forms and New Areas of Employment Growth: A Comparative Study*, EC Commission, Brussels 1987.

aborting the renewal of economic development to which it could lead. The theme of responsible productive activity is reduced to that of labour flexibility—a passive identification of employees with their enterprises, stripped of any challenge to enterprise objectives or ownership. At the same time democratic restraints on business activity are undermined. It is not that modern enterprise can function without politically defined regimes, but the construction and reform of supervisory regimes is increasingly controlled by the corporate sector itself, under the protection accorded by free-market ideologies. No doubt, deformed and unbalanced growth models can emerge even under such conditions, but they prove to be cyclical phenomena rather than the basis of a sustained pattern of development.

The process of integration within the EC is crucial to the successful emergence of such a post-Fordist, post-Taylorist model of development. Subordinated to the neo-liberal project, integration will mean only the gradual erosion of social constraints on the normless self-definition of economic objectives by the strongest enterprises themselves. But, won over for the possibilities of an emancipatory supersession of the Fordist model, the integration process (itself irreversible) can help to establish the framework for productive use of the human abilities which, in Europe today, are immobilized by unemployment and the perpetuation of obsolete disciplines.

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John Foster
Charles Woolfson

Corporate Reconstruction and Business Unionism: the Lessons of Caterpillar and Ford

Technological determinism has recently emerged as the favoured theme of those who seek to challenge the centrality of class politics within the British labour movement*. This somewhat uncharacteristic perspective is used to argue that new production technologies are directly creating a new political environment. Production processes, it is asserted, are becoming smaller in scale, more individualized and flexible, and, critically, their superior productivity depends precisely on harnessing the creativity of the individual within the dynamics of the small group. It is argued that this has a potential for ideological transformation which has been seized by the present government. It is Thatcherism, not the labour movement, which has placed itself in command of technological progress and used it to stabilize, in a mass way, its new enterprise culture. As a result, the very survival of organized labour is at stake. Unless it now responds positively, the contemporary trade union movement will disappear as quickly as the giant factory complexes of Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester. One feature of this argument is that it has remained highly abstract. It has simply assumed connections between the

way people work, or are supposed to work, and the way they think. This article seeks to make an initial examination of some concrete circumstances. It takes two instances where employers had introduced, or sought to introduce, new Japanese-style or 'post-Fordist' technologies, and, as part of this, to transform the social context of industrial relations. Both instances occurred in the same setting: the regional politics of Scotland in 1987-88. Both involved American multinationals in which managements were seeking to restructure production globally in face of Japanese competition. At the Caterpillar plant at Uddington this was marked first by the introduction of Japanese-style working practices and then, equally suddenly, by the plant's closure. At Dundee, Ford sought to open a new plant that would operate outside the collective bargaining structures of the rest of the company in Britain, and which would introduce working conditions quite different from those prevailing in Dundee and within Ford plants elsewhere.

It is a feature of both disputes that they were marked by sharp divergences between the majority of shop stewards and those union leaders committed to perspectives which have been described as 'business unionism'. The crux of the conflict was the character of new technology, and how far it could only be utilized on the terms set by corporate capital. In the case of the Dundee plant the leaders of the Amalgamated Engineering Union argued that the investment had to be accepted on the conditions imposed by Ford. Without the new technology, and the economic competitiveness it provided, bargaining about wages and conditions would be futile. Jobs, in short, had to be created before you could negotiate. At Uddington the conflict between stewards and AEU leadership was over how far, and on what terms, corporate restructuring should be opposed. More tacitly in this case, the union leadership took the position that ultimately the logic of restructuring could not be challenged—and certainly should not be in a way that took the union into conflict with the law. It was futile to seek to take the means of production out of the control of the company.

We will begin here with a brief restatement of the two episodes. This will set the scene for a discussion of what is fundamentally at issue: the politico-economic status of the new Japanese-style production methods, how far they represent a historically progressive advance in production technology, and how far they can serve to underpin a new enterprise culture. We conclude by arguing that as implemented by transnational companies, and especially as applied to regional economies, the new production methods are neither socially nor economically progressive and that their introduction has directly heightened class contradictions in the regions. As a result, far from providing the material base for a new enterprise culture, they are already raising issues about the character of the state in its relation to production relations that gives a new, socially wider salience to the politics of working-class solidarity.

The Sequence of Events

The Caterpillar company, the dominant firm in the world market for heavy earth-moving equipment, began its restructuring programme in

* We would like to thank R. Bellamy and C.C. Prendergast for their comments and the ESRC for grant no. F09250171.

1982. Between 1975 and 1982 the firm had seen its share of the world market slip from 48 to 37 per cent with most of the loss being picked up by the Japanese firm, Komatsu. During the recession of 1980–82 Komatsu was able to expand its sales by 15 per cent at a time when Caterpillar lost 40 per cent of its sales outside the US. This was partly the result of the 60 per cent increase in the international value of the dollar between 1980 and 1984 and partly because of a genuinely higher level of productivity in Komatsu.

Komatsu's increased productivity was seen to depend on cell-based flexible manufacturing systems, carrying very low inventory stocks, and on the gearing of its labour force between a highly motivated and trained core and very low-paid temporary workers in subcontract firms. It also benefited from cheap domestic supplies of high-tensile steel, high levels of state-directed and funded expenditure on research and development. Caterpillar began from 1982 to reorganize its plants in ways that utilized some of these production techniques: cutting inventory levels but increasing the range of items bought in from subcontractors, some of it in Third World locations, introducing cell-based flexible manufacturing and closing a good deal of its capacity. Initially between 1982 and 1984 most of the closures took place in the United States (in face of the rapid rise in the value of the dollar), although the Birtley factory in Newcastle was also shut down in 1984. In Europe there was a major push to secure employee acceptance of the changes under the slogan 'Plant with a Future', and most plants had considerable success in introducing the new production techniques.

This was particularly so in the company's Uddingston plant, where the new structure was already beginning to come into operation by 1986. The shop stewards gave full support to the innovation of flexible manufacturing systems. There was a massive retooling—much of it paid for by government investment grants—and just-in-time inventory systems were installed. In September 1986 the company announced with some fanfare an additional £62 million investment programme. This announcement, and the publicity surrounding it, resulted to some extent from Scottish Office pressure—where the Secretary of State wanted to use Caterpillar as a public example that union cooperation could make a success of the government's industrial strategy. Four months later the company announced the closure of the plant.

The closure decision was taken at the Peoria head office in face of continued pressure from the company's stockholders to reduce operating costs and in the light of the precipitate fall in the value of the dollar against the pound. This had made it much less profitable to manufacture in Britain. The workforce occupied the plant immediately after the announcement on 14 January 1987, and did so under the leadership of a Joint Occupation Committee including the representatives of the manual, clerical and supervisory unions. Although the non-manual grades withdrew after a month, the ABU stewards maintained a majority for occupation at four successive votes till the following May—the margin being reduced to half a dozen by the end of March, but this, despite a legal injunction in favour of the company requiring the workforce to abandon the occupation. Financial support from workplaces and street collections exceeded £20,000 each week for the three-month period. From March onwards the

stewards also faced fairly sustained pressure from their own union officers to end the occupation. These pressures, which reached a climax at the annual conference of the Scottish Trades Union Congress in April 1987, resulted in the ending of the occupation with very few concessions by either the company or the Scottish Office in terms of continuing employment. Despite proposals from the workforce and a private suggestion by the senior management at the plant for a management buy-out, the company insisted throughout that no similar line of production could be maintained at the factory. The Scottish Office gave verbal support to the workers, and did not dare try to evict them in an election year, but it applied no serious pressure on the company. Production was terminated at the end of 1987. The AEU leadership appeared to be motivated by a desire not to antagonize the company, and to maintain its image as a business-friendly union. It did not call on workers in Caterpillar's other British plant to black supplies or to come out on solidarity strike, and thus made it very difficult to get wider industrial action involving other unions. It engineered an end to the occupation a month and a half before the General Election and hence took this potentially quite explosive item off the active political agenda.

Restructuring at Ford

Ford's restructuring began a year earlier than Caterpillar's in 1981. Its 'After Japan' programme had the objective of cutting inventory holdings from three to one week's supply, organizing a third of the workforce in quality circles, eliminating a number of supervisory and manual grades, and shedding a fifth of the workers engaged on production. This company-wide programme met resistance in a number of areas but particularly in Britain, where workers demanded West German levels of pay for matching the productivity of the company's West German plants. In 1987-88 Ford UK was still trying to use the annual wage negotiations to secure acceptance of quality circles and new quality team leaders to be chosen by management.¹

The announcement of a deal at Dundee between Ford and the AEU came in October 1987. The full terms of the agreement have never been made public. But the statements of the time indicated that a new plant would be built, that it would ultimately employ more than four hundred workers, that it would be managed by the firm's Electrical and Electronic division making computerized engine controllers, and that only one union, the AEU, would be recognized. Matters of dispute would be settled between AEU officers and the senior executives of Ford UK. The plant would not come under the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee that bargained on wages and conditions for Ford's twenty-two other plants in the UK, and would be exempt from all existing agreements incorporated in the FNJNC's 'blue book'.

¹ We are grateful to Glyn Batchelor for permission to use material in his MPhil dissertation, 'Crisis versus Continuity: the Unions and the Winds of Change' (Glasgow University, 1988) for the sequence of events at Dundee. Reports in *The Scotsman*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Economist*, *Financial Times* and *Morning Star* have also been used. D. Marsden, T. Morris, P. Williams and S. Woods, *The Car Industry, Labour Relations and Industrial Adjustment*, London 1983, provides a general background.

The TGWU, TASS, and ASTMS immediately lodged complaints with the TUC and STUC about breach of procedure by the AEU, and the TUC set up a committee of enquiry. Later in October the FNJNC itself announced a decision to black all parts produced by the Dundee plant. Five months later, in March 1988, Ford declared that it was not proceeding with the Dundee plant. There was a massive Scottish Office and press assault on the TGWU and TUC for depriving an unemployment black spot of new jobs. Within five days the TUC announced that it had itself approved the deal, and a delegation was sent to Detroit to get Ford to change its mind. This proved unsuccessful.

While the AEU's temporary failure to secure TUC backing for its deal may have had some impact, a number of other significant events had occurred in the intervening five months. The stock market had suffered a serious reverse, and industrial action in February 1988 by Ford's NJNC had secured a major increase in wages for all British plants. The FNJNC successfully resisted demands for a three-year wage deal which would have included provisions for the full introduction of Japanese-style working practices (quality circles, discretionary payments, employer-selected team leaders and 15 per cent temporary workers). In addition to these developments on the industrial relations front, the pound had risen in value quite considerably against continental currencies and by a full ten per cent against the dollar. In August 1988 Ford announced that it would build the new plant in Spain.

Looking at the two episodes together, we find a number of intriguing parallels and links. For the AEU Gavin Laird was an important actor in both. He knew the Caterpillar management well and was involved in at least some of the top-level negotiations. He was also instrumental, apparently through his membership of the Scottish Development Agency, in gaining information on Ford's wish to establish a Scottish plant and then going after single-union rights. The same dual involvement applied to the Scottish Secretary of State, Malcolm Rifkind, and the Scottish Office. Both episodes were highly politicized by the government itself. Rifkind used the 1986 Caterpillar investment plan to publicize the success of his industrial policy, and found himself under intense political pressure when closure was announced. Immediately after the election, and the loss of half of Scotland's Tory MPs, Rifkind faced the need to reverse the tide of public opinion and to present his administration as an effective promoter of Scots economic growth. In August 1987 he stated that 'for every Caterpillar there are a thousand butterflies', and in September he went out of his way to welcome the Dundee decision. Subsequently the Scottish Office press department waged a sustained campaign to present the backward attitudes of the Scottish trade union movement on Dundee as the main reason for the country's unemployment and the loss of new investment.

The real importance of examining the two episodes in parallel, however, concerns the fundamental question of the trade union movement's response to the new investment strategies of multinational firms and in particular the character and significance of the new Japanese-style production methods—centrally involved in the decisions of both Caterpillar and Ford. This question stands at the heart of the new ethic of business unionism. Put very briefly, the defence of the AEU position on

both occasions would involve the following assumptions. A union's first job is to defend its organization, expand membership and, as a condition for both, to maintain and if possible to expand general levels of industrial employment. In modern conditions this can only be achieved by working with management to achieve maximum levels of productivity. Given the intensity of international competition and the speed of technological advance, it will also mean adopting the most advanced working practices and cooperating with corporate reconstruction plans. This will ultimately be rewarded with higher real incomes for members. Conversely, the consequence of not cooperating will be deindustrialization and the collapse of any serious base for unionization. At Caterpillar the objective would be to defend employment at the remaining Leicester plant and to avoid stigmatization of the AEU as a union that obstructed corporate reconstruction. At Dundee it would be to create jobs as a basis for subsequent negotiation.²

Japanization and Productivity

It is generally agreed that the production techniques developed in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s were considerably more cost-effective than those being used by their competitors in West Germany and America. This has led to many attempts at emulation by non-Japanese companies. At the same time the reasons for Japan's lead, and the question of what precisely should be copied, remain a matter of sharp controversy. Let us briefly consider the four main explanations that have been offered.

The most orthodox interpretation, and the one favoured in Japan itself, is that the secret lies in the high level of cooperation between workers and management. The introduction of flexible manufacturing systems had its origin, it is claimed, in the development of a mass-production Japanese car industry in the early 1960s. It represented an attempt to utilize in the most intensive way what, in comparison with the US, was a relatively small-scale capital and technology. This meant involving the workers themselves in the active pursuit of quality and efficiency, enhancing the character of the labour process to include areas normally allocated to management, breaking down the boundary of union-management conflict and hence mobilizing the creative ability of workers. The outcome was a new relation between labour and the tools of production that had a cumulative and progressive content. Harnessing the creative ability of workers made it possible to improve the quality component on the job, to eliminate waste of time and materials, to integrate production tasks flexibly as the need arose and to do so within teams positively oriented to the maximization of production flow. Thus, it is claimed, allowed Japanese firms to base their commercial strategy on the production of the *quality* compact car and gave them the flexibility to achieve a rapid upgrading and diversification of models. The same techniques were subsequently transferred to electronics and IT to give Japan a world lead by the 1980s. This interpretation, then, would make the technology of Japanese industry an entirely progressive advance that was transferable to other countries in a fairly direct and uncomplicated way. Its essence was not in the

² C Woolfson and J Foster, *Track Record: the Story of the Caterpillar Occupation*, London 1988

equipment itself, certainly not in the size of production runs, but rather in the intensity, effectiveness and flexibility with which it was used.³

The second interpretation stresses the special character of the Japanese labour market.⁴ Unlike its counterparts in the West, Japan's industrialization process has *maintained* a major labour reserve of unemployed or underemployed. This feature, partly hidden by an overpopulated peasant agriculture, has permitted the continued existence of a *dual* labour market. The typical pattern of employment in the 1960s (and indeed in the 1980s) was one of permanent core workers supported by a raft of temporary workers whose wages were at least one third lower and whose conditions of employment were far worse. Some of these workers were employed by the big firms themselves, but a majority worked in subcontract units tied to the production of components for particular major producers. This gearing of low-paid, temporary workers to a small core of highly paid, highly trained and highly motivated permanent workers is, it is argued, the real explanation of the productivity of Japanese industry and what has made possible the introduction of flexible manufacturing systems. Statistically, it is certainly true that, alone among major industrialized countries, Japanese capital has enjoyed a situation where its share of national income has actually increased over long periods—including the thirty years subsequent to the Second World War. This interpretation would not, therefore, contest the advance in productivity but would claim that it was made feasible by external factors, particularly structural unemployment, which both negated militant trade unionism and underpinned a special kind of business unionism among the permanent workers.⁵

The third explanation, not one generally endorsed in Japan, stresses the special role of the Japanese state. It argues that the productivity of Japanese firms stems from the way in which innovation in particular industries was controlled, orchestrated and protected by a massive level of government assistance. It focuses on the interlocking of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the private banking conglomerates (*zaibatsu*) which control the great bulk of Japanese industry. State intervention has the following elements: the setting of long-term targets for industrial advance, the negotiation of technology imports and licensing deals on behalf of strategic firms, high levels of state-assisted and directly-relevant research and development (Japan has very low levels of military R&D), and comprehensive steering of investment to create cumulative and interlinked production efficiencies (cheap high-quality steel, consumer durables, electronics). In addition, the MITI ensured effective forms of protection for the home market until domestic industry had reached the level of productivity needed to meet external competition.

³ K. Shimokawa, 'Product and Labour Strategies in the Contemporary Japanese Motor Industry', paper to the International Conference on the Automobile Industry and its Workers, Coventry, June 1984; D. Friedman, *The Misunderstood Miracle*, Cornell, 1988.

⁴ The historico-cultural argument for Japanese 'exceptionalism' is typically put by M. Morishima, *Why Has Japan 'Succeeded'? Western Technology and the Japanese Ethos*, Cambridge 1982.

⁵ R. Minami, *The Economic Development of Japan*, London 1986; K. Yamamura and Y. Yasuba, *Political Economy of Japan, Vol. 1: Domestic Transformation*, Stanford 1987.

This was matched by a systematic undervaluation of the Japanese yen to boost export penetration abroad and to hold foreign investments at arm's length. Some versions of this interpretation would also stress the role of the state in maintaining the required labour market conditions. This included the active promotion of relevant education and training on a much wider scale than in the United States or Great Britain. More negatively, it involved the imposition of a climate of conformism and authoritarian deference, sustained in part by long-term structural underemployment and, especially in the cold war period of the early 1950s, by active interventions to eliminate radical influences in the trade union movement.⁶

The fourth and final interpretation takes the most negative view of Japanese production methods. While admitting the existence of highly productive technology within core firms, it argues that a significant part of the cheapening of production factors derives from the off-loading of costs in a way that is socially not cost-effective even in Japan. The just-in-time cutting of inventories shifts costs and risks onto the subcontractor and its workforce. In particular it depends on a big firm/small firm hierarchy with sharply defined functions and an almost feudal dependence. Moreover, this 'captive' layer of subcontract firms is, it is argued, a positive hindrance to the *autonomous* development of new firms and the transfer of advanced technology to non-Japanese economies.⁷

Taking all these explanations together, it is probably true that each one has at least some element of truth. Japanese production methods do unquestionably involve genuine advances in productivity and have made possible a far more intensive use of capital by core producers. At the same time, it would seem equally indisputable that in Japan this depends on a dual labour market and very high levels of detailed intervention by the Japanese state in the process of innovation itself. It would also seem to depend on a strong element of direct state subsidy and protection and on the off-loading of costs to small business, temporary workers and, perhaps increasingly, non-Japanese economies.

Japanization and Regional Growth

On balance it might be argued that in Japan itself the process is technologically progressive—albeit at the cost of at least temporarily reducing the power of organized labour. The rate of growth has been accelerated even if the socially inequitable use of the product is likely to create serious long-term problems for Japanese society. The same verdict might also be given on the adoption of this technology by core corporate producers elsewhere. To the extent that the reorganization involves the same combination of efficient labour usage and genuine technological advance (and is not just a more intensive way of exploiting labour or justifying more

⁶ C. Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Economic Miracle*, Stanford 1982.

⁷ T. Shurai, ed., *Contemporary Industrial Relations in Japan*, University of Wisconsin, 1984, emphasizes the dependence on the Japanese cultural and political environment. P. Briggs, 'The Japanese at Work: Illusions of the Ideal', *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring) 1988, stresses the element of coercive conformism.

oppressive management practices), then it might be argued that technologically, though not socially, it has some progressive content.⁸

It is another matter, however, when we turn to the relation between multinational *branch plants* and their host economy. If we define technological progress in terms of how far a new production process aids or hinders the full utilization of a region's human resources *comparatively* to their potential (and to best performance elsewhere), the conclusion would seem to be much more negative.⁹ First of all there is the question of how the technology of the multinational relates to the local economy. There would seem to be very little scope for active technology transfer. Research and development will be concentrated in the country of origin where, if the full Japanese model is followed, it can draw on the detailed support of its own state. In general the branch plant will be limited to certain segments of production: either components that are re-exported or the assemblage of components that are imported. In the latter case, particularly within the European Community, the plant will also utilize a high ratio of local subcontractors to undertake low-level work. This itself poses a further problem. Because Japanese-style production techniques demand a very close working relationship between core producer and supplier, often as the only purchaser, this can have a seriously debilitating effect on the general industrial infrastructure. While small subcontractors may acquire expertise in limited areas of technology and quality control, they will not develop the kind of all-round marketing and design skills of the more traditional type, and within the new relationship they will tend to be much more vulnerable to contraction or closure by the core producer. For this reason the sources of autonomous industrial growth within the indigenous economy are likely to be significantly weakened.

In the case of a branch plant within an overseas economy it is also important to remember that there will not be anything like the comprehensive, planned development of *local* productive resources that has been such an important part of Japanese growth. On the contrary, the devotion of a high proportion of local economic resources to the supply of an external firm will itself represent a major opportunity cost. The same resources could be used *more* productively and *more* reliably in terms of technological advance if they were indeed part of planned local growth.

The other area where it is necessary to question the progressive character of the external use of Japanese-style production is its social and political impact. Even here, however, we are not far from the question of technology and its transfer. One characteristic of branch plant production is its instability. External branch plants tend to close first. Because they are narrowly based on particular product specialisms, they are highly vulnerable to the periodic restructuring of corporate production. They are also highly exposed to the effects of competition between different trading blocs and to the writing-off (or sale) of capital during crises of over-capitalization. This gives a quite different significance to the weakening

⁸ M. Marchington, 'Japanisation: a Lack of Chemical Reaction', *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Winter) 1988.

⁹ P. Garrahan, 'Nissan in the North East of England', *Capital and Class*, Vol. 27, 1985; J. Holloway, 'The Red Rose of Nissan', *Capital and Class*, Vol. 32, 1987; A. McFadyen, *The Nissan Plant*, Newcastle Trades Council, 1988.

of the power of organized labour which, we argued, was one of the balancing and socially non-progressive features of the new technology even in Japan. At the most minimal level, Japanese-style production requires a type of cooperation between labour and management that undercuts traditional trade union bargaining about the character of work performed. Insofar as it also demands a dual labour market, a structural division between core and temporary workers, it introduces a fundamental obstacle to effective solidarity action. The consequence in a non-core economy is not just that labour may be less effective in its collective efforts to secure a share of the increased productivity. More critically, it imposes serious limits on the ability of the labour movement to control the investment itself, to stop closure and to ensure that a firm does indeed maximize the local benefits of technology transfer. The resulting weakening of the labour movement's political weight will make it much more difficult to force its own government to place effective constraints on external capital or to substitute state-led policies for technological advance.

Working-Class Action and Business Unionism

This truth is well illustrated by the Caterpillar episode. Caterpillar had reorganized itself fairly consciously on Japanese lines to compete with Komatsu. In 1986 its restructuring programme was thrown unpredictably out of gear by currency movements and the intensity of its own corporate crisis. Its move to close Uddingston was part of an effort to reduce its capital base and cut operating costs. The firm also insisted that the entire production process had to be removed so that no potentially competitive production facilities remained on site. This was in spite of—or rather because of—the clear market niche for a large part of the Uddingston output, track spares. In their attempt to pursue alternatives, both the plant management and the workforce were hampered by their lack of marketing skills and the fact that the plant had little or no research and design capacity of its own.

Still more damaging, however, was the way the assumptions of business unionism affected the character of the trade union representation. The AEU leadership had been convinced of the need to cooperate with business at almost any cost to defend the union's position. At each stage they appear to have underestimated both their own members' will to resist and the wider support that existed in the West of Scotland. The loss of jobs and members at Uddingston was undoubtedly a blow to the AEU. But once it had happened, the union officers wanted to avoid anything that might prejudice the union's wider standing as a reliable partner for big business. Before the January 1987 announcement, and after the closure of the Birdey factory in 1984, nothing had been done to build up effective solidarity between the two remaining Caterpillar plants at Leicester and Uddingston—even though it was clear that Caterpillar as a company was likely to cut still more capacity. During the fight to save the plant no call was made by the AEU for the blacking of parts or for solidarity action elsewhere. The transport workers in Greenock and Grangemouth responded to the call from the stewards to black movements of Caterpillar containers. The CGT-organized workers at Caterpillar's French plant threatened to strike if the Caterpillar workers were evicted. But the AEU itself issued no call.

The stance of the AEU leadership, and in particular its attempt to secure what it saw as an orderly withdrawal from the occupation, also made it very difficult to put effective pressure on the Scottish Office at its most vulnerable point in the run-up to a general election. Where an even moderately interventionist government could have found ways of putting pressure on Caterpillar, Riskind and the Scottish Office did nothing. Neither the feasibility of the spares operation nor the size of the British market for earth-moving equipment was used to force concessions. Once the election was over even the pretence of concern disappeared. The net result was the total removal of the production process from Scotland.

To this extent, it would seem obvious that the assumptions of business unionism are seriously flawed when it comes to dealing with the restructuring plans of international big business. A simple faith that increased competitiveness will benefit workers is not enough. It is the argument here that when corporate restructuring involves regional locations or is controlled from overseas, any move which weakens the bargaining power of labour will not just undermine wages and conditions but also militate against the longer-term social and political conditions for real economic growth.

Taking this argument forward, we would suggest that particular care needs to be taken when negotiating *new* investment. Transnational companies will be highly interested in creating conditions for the freest and most flexible disposition of their capital without regard to regional interests. They will therefore actively use their location policy as an instrument to undermine the bargaining strength of labour. But this gives no guarantee that the jobs will be permanent or will even appear at all. The damage to trade union cohesion may well last longer.

Ford's actions over Dundee show this clearly. All the conditions for the new plant seemed directly designed to undermine the bargaining unity of the Ford shop stewards combine—at a time when the firm was trying to introduce the first elements of a dual labour market structure as part of its national wage negotiations. For the business unionists at the AEU this was justified by the creation of jobs in an unemployment black spot. But the subsequent reversal of policy by Ford shows just how naive this belief was. While companies will seek to use opportunities to undermine trade unionism, the complexity of factors influencing corporate decision-making makes 'sweetheart' deals no guarantee of jobs.

The Scottish Office sought to argue that it was union obstruction which caused the company's withdrawal. On the evidence, this seems highly unlikely. The company itself never claimed this. When Ford relocated the plant in Spain, no attempt was made to exclude it from existing trade union bargaining structures. In October 1988 Ford announced a much larger investment plan for a new plant at Bridgend in Wales, where workers had been as militant as any during the February 1988 strike. Trade union attitudes were clearly only one factor besides a number of others.

Such experiences demonstrate that multinational corporations have to take decisions in conditions of uncertainty, and that their options are not unlimited. In order to meet the competition of rivals, they have to invest in the relevant market area—in Ford's case, within the European Com-

munity. Future assessments of currency stability will be one factor. The pliability of host governments might be another. Political stability would be a third. But ultimately a decision has to be made. Delay in commissioning investment can be as dangerous as investing in the wrong place. Accordingly, the game of corporate musical chairs takes place within limited alternatives. Collectively, across Europe, the trade union movement has potentially an important role in determining how limited these alternatives are. But it can only do so if it understands what it is doing and does not seek illusory short-cuts.

The Regional Dimension

This brings us finally to the specifically regional aspects of the two disputes. Both episodes were marked out by the degree to which they were accorded central significance within contemporary Scottish politics, and to that extent they reveal how far corporate reconstruction has politicized industrial relations on a regional basis. We have argued that whatever may be the technologically progressive character of the new production methods for core producers, this does not extend to other areas. There is usually very little technology transfer. The free-market trading conditions demanded by incoming investors militate against indigenous industry. The surplus accumulated by the branch plant generally remains within the company and does not find its way back into the local economy. Finally, whenever closure occurs, the opportunity cost, in terms of the potentially alternative uses of the same productive resources, becomes starkly apparent. Very rarely is it possible to continue production in the same product area.

These lessons, well learnt in Scotland before the Caterpillar closure, were one reason why the issue was politically so sensitive. The wider regional support for the workers' action—not just from other industrial workplaces but from a very broad swathe of Scottish opinion—would seem to have enabled the stewards, against all the odds, and despite opposition from their own union leaders, to continue the occupation for so long. Although the occupation ended in April, the issues of external control, de-industrialization and the role of the state became central ones in the run-up to the 1987 election. The Scottish press, reflecting this climate, was strongly supportive, and even on the issue of 'breaking the law' it was not possible to isolate Caterpillar shop stewards.²⁰ Indeed, it was Riskind's prior awareness of just how weak he was on the industrial front, particularly when it came to his reliance on external investment, that led him into his disastrous liaison with the company in September 1986. One of his first actions after the election was to attempt to take the offensive once more. He clearly saw his political credibility as closely linked to the question of whether capital or labour was to be regarded as the champion of regional interests. The rhetoric around Dundee was fairly crudely designed to reverse the recent verdict of the electorate. The same ideological

²⁰ Within the plant the recognition that Conservative employment legislation had largely closed off alternative forms of effective industrial action was significant in the decision to 'ignore' an injunction ordering them out of the premises. Woolfson and Foster, *op. cit.*, pp. 273–6. See also S. Evans, 'The Use of Injunctions in Industrial Disputes, May 1984–April 1987', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1987.

dimension would also appear to have been one major element in the involvement of the AEU leadership. The Caterpillar dispute had called in question the credentials of business unionism in Scotland and seriously weakened the regional position of the right wing. The zeal with which the AEU leadership set up the Ford deal at Dundee suggests that this project had at least as much to do with maintaining its own political position as with four hundred jobs.

The evidence is thus overwhelming that the politico-economic realities of the new forms of industrial organization have added a regional dimension to the conduct of industrial relations. The uneven distribution of costs and benefits is a matter of major concern, not just to the immediate workforce but to the whole regional community. It has created the basis for political alliances that can potentially do much to modify the relations between the state and multinational firms. This is why the strength and independence of the local trade union movement is an issue of no small importance. Only if the trade union movement is not ensnared in special relationships with incoming capital, and not structurally weakened by the acceptance of dual labour markets, will it be able to take the lead in 'bargaining up' (rather than down) on a regional basis across Europe and wider afield. To this extent the effectiveness of regional coalitions, and their ability to defend local economic development, depends very largely on exposing the assumptions of business unionism as economically and technologically invalid.

This clarity is also crucial for the future conduct of regional politics in Scotland. The 1987 general election saw the Labour Party emerge as the immediate beneficiary of popular mobilization. Afterwards, however, Labour's Scottish leadership singularly failed to follow through the politics of active opposition, and its electoral support has begun to swing away to the Scottish National Party. In November 1988 the SNP inflicted a crushing defeat on Labour in the working-class stronghold of Govan. Since then the SNP's rapid rise in the opinion polls has led the party's leadership to believe that it is on the threshold of a successful struggle for independence. In reality, both parties appear to have seriously misread the intentions of Scottish voters. Voting Labour in 1987 did not mean support for the new realism of the Kinnock leadership. On the contrary, it was far more a gesture of identification with the active, extra-parliamentary struggle typified by the Caterpillar workers and the earlier actions led by the STUC. In 1987 the Scottish labour movement gave the appearance of being in direct conflict with the Conservative Government, and the big business policies it represented. Subsequently the imposition of a constitutionalist line on the Labour Party in Scotland, particularly over the issue of the poll tax, saw working-class voters looking elsewhere for a party which would, as they saw it, utilize the same extra-parliamentary methods to fight the Tories. However, there is little evidence that this means support for separatism, and the SNP could pay dearly for its mistaken assessment. The party's decision to pull out of the Scottish Convention, and to pose independence against the campaign for a Scottish Assembly, has perilous parallels with the party's attempt to play alliance politics with the Tories in 1979. On that occasion the SNP sought to exploit the balance of power at Westminster to secure concessions from the Conservative Party and, in doing so, helped to bring down the Labour

Government. This misjudgement left them in the political wilderness for a decade.

On both occasions the SNP has failed to appreciate the complex interweaving of class and national factors within Scottish popular consciousness. This is not the place to explore this theme, but it is important to remember the *duality* of national identity in Scotland and the degree to which the formation of its labour movement had a very strong *international* dimension; posed against both Scottish and British capital and depending on the development of class intervention on a British level.²² The significance of changes over the past two decades has laid in the progressive erosion of the statist and reformist assumptions of this Labour identity. The state has been seen with increasing clarity, far beyond the ranks of the labour movement, as articulating the uneven and anti-regional logic of big business development—and, conversely, greater significance has been attached to active class mobilization against big business. To this extent, there has been an underestimate of the level of political consciousness by both Labour and the SNP, and it is important to stress that the process is unlikely to have finished. The battle over the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in the early 1970s did much to change the balance between left and right within the Scottish labour movement. It made it possible to break free from existing Labourist assumptions about regional planning through and with the cooperation of big business at British level. It thereby created a basis for articulating specifically regional and national issues and forming a wider alliance with small business and professional strata.²³ But the depth of the critique was limited. It was about the right to work and the maintenance of existing indigenous heavy industries. The battles of the mid-1980s have been about new systems of production, who controls them and how they affect the articulation and development of society as a whole.

The symbol of the Caterpillar occupation was a tractor named the Pink Panther. This was constructed in record time, using all the techniques of flexible manufacturing, by the workers in illegal occupation of their workplace. The workers wanted to use it to demonstrate both their mastery of the new technology and the need for their product on a world scale. They donated it to the people of Nicaragua. The company took legal action to prevent its export, and for months the tractor stood on a site provided by the City of Glasgow in the middle of George Square—the scene of working-class mobilization in 1919. It symbolized both the potential of the new technology and the limitations imposed on it by corporate capital. Scottish workers and technicians might be able to produce in the most advanced way. Consumers in the Third World might need their output. But big business could quite effortlessly ensure that such earth-moving equipment was not again to be produced in Scotland. To this extent it

²² This is explored further in *Track Record*, op. cit., pp. 19–27, and in J. Foster, 'Nationality, Class and Social Change', in D. McCrone, ed., *The Making of Scotland*, Edinburgh 1989.

²³ The issue of regional coalitions and alliances is dealt with, among others, by R. Dulong, *Les Régions, l'Etat et la Société Locale*, Paris 1978, J. Foster and C. Woolfson, *The Politics of the UK Work-in*, London 1986; and S. Lynd, *The Fights Against Shutdowns*, San Pedro 1983, and E. Mann, *Taking On General Motors. A Case Study of the UAW Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuts Open*, Los Angeles 1987.

demonstrated the most central fallacy of the post-Fordist thesis. Production may now be more flexible, potentially small-scale and individualized. But whether it involves the production of tractors or designer knit-wear, its marketing is controlled and dominated by monopoly capital. Indeed, it is in this area that the most intensive and financially expensive struggle takes place between rival corporate producers. At the end of the occupation Caterpillar quickly exerted its monopolistic power to halt plans for the Uddington plant to continue in production through the manufacture of track spares—and was able to rely on the British state to uphold its right to do so.

Conclusion

This article has sought to question some of the assumptions of business unionism, and particularly its central contention that the new post-Fordist industrial environment demands trade union collaboration as the price of survival. The argument here has been that this perspective is based on a primitive and superficial understanding of how corporate capital is reorganizing its production. It is not just that the establishment of a branch plant is no guarantee of real economic growth. This was already a feature of the 1960s and 1970s. It is that the new techniques of production, whether as developed in Japan or as adapted by American, German or British companies, require a systematic enfeebling of trade union organization in the plant and the introduction of labour-market structures which militate against labour's wider cohesion. It is precisely this which perpetuates the conditions for an uneven technological division of labour and off-loads costs on a regional economy in a way which inhibits further growth.

In this context it is important to make a final comment about planning. We noted how much companies in Japan depended on state intervention, in very detailed and sophisticated ways, to create the technological conditions for their growth and to ensure the necessary hierarchies of business and labour relationships. Obviously, the firms themselves also rely on a highly elaborated interlocking of different production processes on a world scale. Whatever the social system, a large-scale planned coordination of output would today seem essential in order to create the conditions for globally competitive production. However, the creation of such conditions is not a neutral phenomenon. It cannot be abstracted from the mode of production. It is worth remembering that the origin of flexible manufacturing systems and batch production was in the Soviet Union during the last war.¹³ As adopted by corporate capital, it has a quite different significance for the harnessing of group dynamics and individual initiative, and thereby for the wider balance of class forces in host countries. Optimum planning for the corporation involves a reverse for existing regional economies. It actively promotes economic dislocation, the breaking up of internal linkages and the creation of new hierarchical structures. For the labour movement the key priority must be to understand this process, not collaborate with it, and to pose its own alternative.

¹³ See V. A. Petrov, *Flowline Group Production Planning*, Moscow 1966, pp. 1–2 (English translation, Business Publications Ltd., London 1968), and A. Aganbegyan, *The Challenge: Economics of Perestroika*, London 1988, pp. 88–96.

At minimum this would appear to demand a number of basic responses to corporate reconstruction: that the autonomy of the shop steward is protected; that all improvements in productivity are bargained and not imposed; and that there is no introduction of a dual labour market (and subcontract labour). More positively, it requires the wider political strength which can compel the state directly to counter the planning of corporate capital. The biggest deterrent to the closure of any plant would, for instance, be the ability to transfer its full technology—as required for the complete production process—into the regional economy.

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The Situationist International

De Sade liberated from the Bastille in 1789, Baudelaire on the barricades in 1848, Courbet tearing down the Vendôme Column in 1870—French political history is distinguished by a series of glorious and legendary moments which serve to celebrate the convergence of popular revolution with art in revolt. In this century avant-garde artistic movements took up the banner of revolution consciously and enduringly. The political career of André Breton and the surrealists began with their manifestoes against the Moroccan war (the 'Riff' war) in 1925 and persisted through to the Manifesto of the 121, which Breton signed in 1960, shortly before his death, denouncing the Algerian war and justifying resistance. In May 1968 the same emblematic role was enacted once again by the militants of the Situationist International. The SI was founded in 1957, at Cosio d'Arroscia in northern Italy, principally out of the union of two prior avant-garde groups, the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (Asger Jorn, Pinot Gallizio and others) and the Lettrist International (led by Guy Debord).¹ The Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus itself originated from splits in the post-war Cobra group of artists, which Jorn had helped found, and the SI was

soon joined by another key Cobra artist, Constant. The ancestry of both Cobra and Lettrism can be traced back to the international Surrealist movement, whose break-up after the war led to a proliferation of new splinter groups and an accompanying surge of new experimentation and position-taking.² The SI brought together again many of the dispersed threads which signalled the decay and eventual decomposition of surrealism. In many ways, its project was that of re-launching surrealism on a new foundation, stripped of some of its elements (emphasis on the unconscious, quasi-mystical and occultist thinking, cult of irrationalism) and enhanced by others, within the framework of cultural revolution.

In its first phase (1957–1962) the SI developed a number of ideas which had originated in the Lettrist International, of which the most significant were those of *urbanisme unitaire* (integrated city-creation, unitary urbanism), psycho-geography, play as free and creative activity, *dérive* (drift) and *dévolement* (diversion, semantic shift).³ The SI expounded its position in its journal, brought out books and embarked on a number of artistic activities. Artists were to break down the divisions between individual art-forms, to create *situations*, constructed encounters and creatively lived moments in specific urban settings, instances of a critically transformed everyday life. They were to produce settings for situations⁴ and experimental models of possible modes of transformation of the city, as well as to agitate and polemicize against the sterility and oppression of the actual environment and ruling economic and political system.

During this period a number of prominent painters and artists from many European countries joined the group and became involved in the activities and publications of the SI. With members from Algeria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy and Sweden, the SI became a genuinely international movement, held together organizationally by annual conferences (57—Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy; 58—Paris, France; 59—Munich, Germany; 60—London, England; 61—Gothenburg, Sweden; 62—Antwerp, Belgium) and by the journal, which was published once or twice a year in Paris, with an editorial committee that changed over time and represented the different national sections.⁵

¹ For the history of the SI, see Mirella Bandini, *L'estetica, il politico*, Rome 1977, which also reprints a number of crucial documents, and Jean-Jacques Raspand and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *L'Internationale Situationniste*, Paris 1972, which contains a chronology, a bibliography and annotated indexes and tables. The full run of the journal is collected in *Internationale Situationniste*, 1958–1969, Paris 1975, and the 'official' history of the movement is by Jean-François Marion, *Histoire de l'Internationale Situationniste*, Paris 1989. In English, see Ken Knabb, *Situationist International*, Berkeley 1981.

² For Cobra, see Jean-Clarence Lambert, *Cobra*, New York 1983, and *Cobra, 1948–1951*, catalogue of the exhibition held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1982. For the prehistory of the SI see Gérard Berreby, *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale Situationniste*, Paris 1985. For Lettrisme, see the self-presentation in Isidore Isou, *De l'impressionisme au Lettrisme*, Paris 1974. See also Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, Cambridge 1989, for an erudite and sympathetic account of Lettrisme and its aftermath in the SI.

³ See Berreby, *op. cit.*, *passim*, and the journal of the SI, especially the first issue, which contains definitions.

⁴ See G.E. Debord, 'Rapport sur la construction des situations . . .', in Bandini and Berreby, *op. cit.*

⁵ For group photographs, see the journal of the SI, *passim*.

From the point of view of art, 1959 was an especially productive (or should one say, dialectically destructive?) year. Three artists held major exhibitions of their work. Asger Jorn showed his 'Modifications' (*peintures décastrées*, altered paintings) at the Rive Gauche gallery in Paris.⁶ These were over-paintings by Jorn on second-hand canvases by unknown painters, which he bought in flea-markets or the like, transforming them by this double inscription. The same year Pinot Gallizio held a show of his *caverna dell'antimateria* (grotto of anti-matter) at the Galerie René Drouin.⁷ This was the culmination of his experiments with *pittura industriale*—rolls of canvas up to 145 metres in length, produced mainly by hand, but with the aid of painting machines and spray-guns with special resins devised by Pinot Gallizio himself (he had been a chemist before he became a painter, linking the two activities under Jorn's encouragement). The work was draped all round the gallery and Gallizio also sold work by the metre by chopping lengths off the roll. His painting of this period was both a 'diverted' parody of automation (which the SI viewed with hostile concern) and a prototype of vast rolls of 'urbanist' painting which could engulf whole cities. Later in 1959 Constant exhibited a number of his *îlots-maquettes* (model precincts) at the Stedelijk museum in Amsterdam.⁸ These were part of his ongoing 'New Babylon' project, inspired by unitary urbanism—the design of an experimental utopian city with changing zones for free play, whose nomadic inhabitants could collectively choose their own climate, sensory environment, organization of space and so on.

The First Split

However, during this period a series of internal disagreements arose inside the organization which finally culminated in a number of expulsions and a split in 1962, when a rival Second Situationist International was set up by Jörgen Nash (Asger Jorn's younger brother) and joined by others from the Dutch, German and Scandinavian sections. In broad terms, this can be characterized as a split between 'artists' and 'political theorists' (or 'revolutionaries'). The main issue at stake was the insistence of the 'theoretical' group, based around Debord in Paris, that art could not be recognized as a separate activity, with its own legitimate specificity, but must be dissolved into a unitary revolutionary praxis.⁹ After the split the SI was reformed and centralized around an office in Paris. Up to 1967 the journal continued to appear annually, but only one more conference was held (1966—in Paris).

During the first, 'art-oriented' phase of the SI, Debord worked with Jorn on collective art books and also made two films, *Sur le passage de quelques*

⁶ The standard work on Jorn is the three-volume Guy Atkins (with the help of Troels Andersen), *Jorn in Scandinavia 1930–1953*, London 1968; *Asger Jorn, The Crucial Years: 1954–1964*, London 1977; and *Asger Jorn, The Final Years 1965–1973*, London 1980. See also Troels Andersen, *Asger Jorn*, Silkeborg 1974, and, for the *Modifications*, the catalogue essay in Asger Jorn, *Peintures décastrées*, Paris 1959, reprinted in Bandini, op. cit.

⁷ For the cavern of anti-matter, see Bandini, op. cit.

⁸ For Constant, see Bandini, op. cit., and Constant, *New Babylon*, The Hague 1974.

⁹ For the history of the 'Nashist' Second Situationist International after the split, see Carl Magnus, Jörgen Nash, Heimirad Prem, Hardy Strid and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, *Situationister i Kassel*, Bauhaus Situationiste, Sweden, 1966, and the defence in Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture*, London 1988.

personnes à travers une assez courte durée de temps (1959) and *Critique de la séparation* (1961).¹⁰ Debord's future orientation can already be clearly seen in the second of these films, which makes a distinct break from the assumptions of the first. Debord had been auditing a university class taught by the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, and subsequently began to collaborate with the revolutionary *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group and issued a joint manifesto in 1960 with its leading theorist, Cornelius Castoriadis. Fairly rapidly, his political and theoretical positions clarified and sharpened to the point when a split was inevitable.

After 1962 Debord assumed an increasingly central role in the SI, surrounded by a new generation of militants who were not professional artists. The earlier artistic goals and projects either fell away or were transposed into an overtly political (and revolutionary) register within a unitary theoretical system. In 1967 Debord published his *magnum opus*, *The Society of the Spectacle*,¹¹ a lapidary totalization of situationist theory, which combined the situationist analysis of culture and society within the framework of a theoretical approach and terminology drawn from Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (published in France by the *Arguments* group of ex-communists who left the party after 1956¹²) and the political line of council communism, characteristic of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, but distinctively recast by Debord.¹³ In this book, Debord described how capitalist societies, East and West (state and market), complemented the increasing fragmentation of everyday life, including labour, with a nightmarish false unity of the 'spectacle', passively consumed by the alienated workers (in the broadest possible sense of non-capitalists and non-bureaucrats). Not until they became 'conscious' (in the totalizing Lukácsian sense) of their own alienation could and would they rise up to liberate themselves and institute an anti-statist dictatorship of the proletariat in which power was democratically exercised by autonomous workers' councils.

The Society of the Spectacle is composed in an aphoristic style, drawing on the philosophical writings of Hegel and the polemical tropes of the young

¹⁰ For Debord's films, see Guy Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, Aarhus 1964, and *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes*, Paris 1978, which both contain full versions of the scripts of films made up to the date of publication. Sadly, the films themselves have been withdrawn by their maker. For an account of their place in the history of French 'experimental' film, see Dominique Noguez, *Éloge du cinéma expérimental*, Paris 1979. See also Tom Levin, forthcoming, Cambridge 1989, 'Debord-er Lines of Spectacle' [sic].

¹¹ Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle*, Paris 1967. American translation by Freddy Perlman, *Society of the Spectacle*, Detroit 1970.

¹² Georg Lukács's *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* first appeared in Berlin in 1923. Sections were translated into French in *Arguments*, nos. 3, 5 and 11, and a full French translation was published in Paris in 1960. An English translation was not to appear till 1967.

¹³ The journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* first appeared in Paris in 1949 and ran for forty numbers until it ceased publication in 1965. For a brief account of the group see Dick Howard, *The Marxist Legacy*, London 1977 (bearing in mind the implications of the word 'legacy') and, more importantly, the republication of Cornelius Castoriadis's writings for the journal in his *Political and Social Writings*, vols 1 and 2, Minnesota 1988. The history of the group is also re-told from the point-of-view of a participant (with much hindsight) by Jean-François Lyotard in his *Peregrinations*, New York 1988.

Marx, and it continues to extol *détournement* (and the obligation to plagiarize) but, in general, it is a work of theory without artistic pretensions. This did not mean, however, that the situationists had retreated from any forms of action but the elaboration of theory. The previous winter a student uprising at the University of Strasbourg, one of a wave sweeping across the world, had been specifically inspired by the SI and based its political activity on situationist theory.¹⁴ The next year, of course, 1968, saw the great revolutionary uprising, first of students, then of workers, which threatened to topple the De Gaulle regime. Here again student groups were influenced by the SI, especially at Nanterre, where the uprising took shape, and the situationists themselves played an active role in the events, seeking to encourage and promote workers' councils, and a revolutionary line within them, without exercising powers of decision and execution or political control of any kind.¹⁵

1968 was the zenith of SI activity and success, but also the beginning of its rapid decline. One more issue of the journal was published, in 1969, and the same year the last conference was held, in Venice. Further splits followed and in 1972 the organization was dissolved. For the situationists 1968 proved a 'Bitter Victory'. Indeed, ironically, their contribution to the revolutionary uprising was remembered mainly through the diffusion and spontaneous expression of situationist ideas and slogans, in graffiti and in posters using *détournement* (mainly of comic strips, a graphic technique pioneered after 1962) as well as in serried assaults on the routines of everyday life. In short, it was a cultural rather than a political contribution, in the sense that the situationists had come to demand. Debord's political theory was more or less reduced to the title of his book, generalized as an isolated catch-phrase, separated from its theoretical project. Council communism was quickly forgotten by students and workers alike.¹⁶

Thus the Situationist International was fated to be incorporated into the legendary series of avant-garde artists and groups whose paths had intersected with popular revolutionary movements at emblematic moments.

¹⁴ See Mustapha Khayati, *De la misère en milieu étudiant*, Strasbourg 1966. This key text was widely and rapidly translated into many languages in pamphlet form and served as one of the main means by which situationist ideas were introduced into the student movements.

¹⁵ See especially no. 12 of the SI journal (the last). For a rival viewpoint see Edgar Morin, Claude Lefort, Jean-Marc Coudray (Cornelius Castoriadis), *Mai 1968. La Brèche*, Paris 1968 with contributions from the founders of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. For an English account sympathetic to the situationist milieu, see Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968*, London 1969, and for a retrospective history with a number of comments on the impact of situationist ideas, see Ronald Fraser, 1968: *A Student Generation in Revolt*, London 1988.

¹⁶ For Debord's own account of the aftermath of 1968, see *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale*, Paris 1972, with its withering dismissal of the pro-situ wannabes of the period. For a concerned critique of the 'simulationist' art-boom of the eighties and its debt to the dry husks of situationist thought, see Edward Ball, 'The Beautiful Language of My Century', in *Arts*, January 1989. The most significant attempt to make use of situationist graphic techniques within a militant political framework, reviving the tradition of agit and poster art, has been in the work of Jamie Reid, especially during the Suburban Press and Sex Pistols periods. For Jamie Reid, see *Up They Rins, the Incomplete Works of Jamie Reid*, with texts by Jamie Reid and Jon Savage, London 1987.

Its dissolution in 1972 brought to an end an epoch which began in Paris with the Futurist Manifesto of 1909—the epoch of the historic avant-gardes with their typical apparatus of international organization and propaganda, manifestoes, congresses, quarrels, scandals, indictments, expulsions, polemics, group photographs, little magazines, mysterious episodes, provocations, utopian theories and intense desires to transform art, society, the world and the pattern of everyday life.

This is a truth, but a partial truth. Separated from the mass of the working class, the SI was bound to remain in memory and in effect what it had begun by being, an art movement, just like the surrealists before it. But at the same time, this neither tells the whole story of the relation between art and politics nor does justice to the theoretical work of the SI and of Debord in particular. If we can see the SI as the summation of the historic avant-gardes, we can equally see it as the summation of 'Western Marxism'—and in neither case does the fact that a period has ended mean that it need no longer be understood or its lessons learned and valued. May '68 was both a curtain-call and a prologue, a turning-point in a drama we are all still blindly living.

Western Marxism

Western Marxism developed in two phases. The first followed the 1914–18 war and the Bolshevik revolution. In 1923 Lukács published his collection of essays *History and Class Consciousness* and Korsch the first edition of *Marxism and Philosophy*.¹⁷ The immediate post-war years had brought a revolutionary ferment in Europe, which was eventually rolled back by the forces of order, leaving the Soviet Union alone and isolated, but in command of a defeated and demoralized international movement. In time, not only was this movement further threatened and mortally attacked by fascism, but the citadel of the Soviet Union fell into the hands of Stalin. The early writings of Lukács and Korsch are the product of the revolutionary ferment itself, while Western Marxism later developed under the shadow of fascism—Gramsci, in an Italian prison; Korsch and the Frankfurt School, in an American exile. Only Lukács went east, to make his peace with Stalinism and adapt his theoretical position accordingly.

The second phase of Western Marxism came after the Second World War and the victory over fascism of the Soviet Union (together, of course, with its American ally). Once again, the growth of resistance movements and the dynamic of victory brought with it a revolutionary ferment, which triumphed in Yugoslavia and Albania, was crushed in Greece and channelled into parliamentary forms in France and Italy. Immediately after the war Sartre began his long process of interweaving existentialism with Marxism, and Lefebvre published his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1946).¹⁸ A

¹⁷ Karl Korsch's *Marxismus und Philosophie* was first published in Leipzig in 1923, with the first English translation, with an introduction by Fred Halliday, London 1970. Korsch, like Lukács, was translated into French by the 'Arguments' group.

¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, Paris 1947. A second edition came out in 1958 with an extensive new introduction. In the interim Lefebvre had been compelled to make a self-criticism by the French Communist Party, which he left after the Budapest uprising of 1956. An English translation is forthcoming from Verso. Note that *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, New York 1971, is a translation of an independent work.

decisive new impetus came when the Soviet Union suppressed the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and a wave of intellectuals left the Western Communist parties. It is from this date especially that we can see the beginnings of the 'New Left' and the intellectual cross-currents which led to 1968.

The shift of the centre of Western Marxism to France from Germany (the product, of course, of the catastrophe of Nazism and the absence of a resistance movement) naturally led to shifts of emphasis. However, these were not as great as might be imagined, because French thought had already opened itself, before the war, to the influence of Hegel (and Heidegger) and it was therefore possible to re-absorb Lukács's writings when they were re-published in the post-56 journal *Arguments*.¹⁹ Indeed, there were many obvious affinities both with Sartre's method and with Lefebvre's.

Debord dates his 'independent' life from 1950, when he first threw himself into the artistic and cultural scene of the Left Bank, its bars, its cinemas, its bookshops.²⁰ His thought was marked in turn by Sartre (the concept of 'situation') and Lefebvre (the critique of everyday life), the *Arguments* group and Lukács (the subject-object dialectic and the concept of 'reification'). In the first instance Debord envisaged Lefebvre's everyday life as a series of fortuitous Sartrean situations. Existence, Sartre had argued, is always existence within surroundings, within a given situation, which is both lived-in and lived-beyond, through the subject's choice of the manner of being in that situation, itself a given. Debord, following Lefebvre's injunction to transform everyday life, interpreted that as an injunction to construct situations, as an artistic and practical activity, rather than accept them as given, to impose a conscious order at least in enclaves of everyday life, an order which would permit fully free activity, play set consciously within the context of everyday life, not separated from it in the sphere of 'leisure'.²¹

From this situation, Debord enlarged his scope to city, and from city to society.²² This, in turn, involved an enlargement of the subject of transformation from the group (the affinity-group of lettrists or situationists with shared goals) to the mass of the proletariat, constructing the totality of social situations in which it lived. It is at this point that Debord was forced to think beyond the sphere of possible action of himself and his immediate associates and engage with classical revolutionary theory.

¹⁹ For the 'Arguments' group, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Post-War France*, Princeton 1975. After leaving the Communist Party, Lefebvre became an editor of *Arguments*. In due course, the group was unsparingly denounced by the *si*.

²⁰ For the Left Bank culture of the period see Ed van der Elken, *Love on the Left Bank*, London 1957, and Guillaume Hanoteau, *L'Âge d'Or du Saint-Germain-des-Près*, Paris 1965, which provide an appealing photographic and anecdotal record. For a somewhat more scholarly account, see Paul Webster and Nicholas Powell, *Saint-Germain-des-Près*, London 1984.

²¹ Note also that for Debord the construction of situations was to be a collective activity.

²² Debord was able to totalize the partial critiques of 'consumerism' which were typical of the period within a Marxist framework that also took account of the increased power and scope of the media.

This, in turn, radicalized him further and sent him back to Western Marxism to reinterpret it on a new basis. Instead of changing transient and brief periods, limited *ambiances*, the aim now was to transform the whole of social space and time. And if it was to be transformed, it first had to be theorized. This theory, it followed, must be the theory of contemporary, even future, society and contemporary alienation (the key idea for Lefebvre).

When Lukács wrote *History and Class Consciousness*, it represented a shift in his thought from 'romantic anti-capitalism' to Marxism, made possible first by the assignment of the role of the subject of history to the working class and, second, the combination of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism with the Hegelian concept of 'objectification' to produce a theory of 'reification' as the contemporary capitalist form of the alienation of human subjectivity. Debord, reading Lukács many decades later, was able to relate his theory of the reification of labour in the commodity to the appearance of 'consumerism' in the long post-war boom of Keynesian capitalism. Just as Lukács was writing during the first period of Fordism, that of standardization and mass production, so Debord was writing in the second, that of variety marketing and mass consumption. Consumer society confronted producers with their products alienated not only in money form, quantitatively, but also in image form, qualitatively, in advertising, publicity, media—instances of the general form of 'spectacle'.

However, in order to get from the 'Report on the Construction of Situations' (1957) to *The Society of the Spectacle* ten years later, Debord had to pass through the portals of the past—the legacy of classical Marxism, discredited by the cruel experience of Stalinism, yet still the sole repository of the concept of proletarian revolution. Scholars have disagreed about the relation of Western to classical Marxism, drawing the dividing line between the two different places. For Perry Anderson, Western Marxism results from the blockage of revolutionary hope in the West and the consequent substitution of Western Marxism, a formal shift away from economics and history towards philosophy and aesthetics, in a long detour from the classical tradition. For Russell Jacoby, in contrast, Western Marxism is a displacement on to the terrain of philosophy of the political 'left' of the classical tradition, the failed opposition to Leninism, articulated politically in the council communist movement.²³

Council communism, the literal interpretation of the slogan 'All power to the soviets!', flourished briefly during the post-1917 period of revolutionary upsurge and marked the work of Lukács, Korsch and Gramsci at that time. Lukács and Gramsci rallied back to the orthodox line, laying emphasis on the party as the condensed organizer of a diffuse class (the Hegelian 'subject' and Machiavellian 'Prince' respectively), while Korsch remained loyal to councilist principles, stressing the self-organization of

²³ See Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, Verso, London 1976, and Russell Jacoby, *Dialectic of Defeat*, Cambridge 1981. These two critical histories, taken together, provide an excellent 'stereoscopic' view of Western Marxism. Martin Jay's *Marxism and Totality*, Berkeley 1984, provides an extremely thorough and illuminating overview, but for a reader interested in the st, it must be supplemented by, for instance, Richard Gombin's *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, London 1975, and *The Radical Tradition*, London 1978, which unashamedly put politics in command of philosophy.

the workers in their own autonomously formed councils. This debate over party and council, the necessary mediations between state and class, reached its highest peak at this period, but it had already taken shape before the war. The debates in the German party between Gorter and Pannekoek (from Holland), Luxemburg and Kautsky, and those in the Russian party between Bogdanov and Lenin prefigured the post-war debates on councils.²⁴ In fact, Lenin polemicized mainly against both the Dutch councilists and Bogdanov in the immediate post-revolutionary years, and figures such as Lukács and Korsch, with no background in the pre-war movement, only felt the backwash of the titanic struggles of their elders.

Syndicalism and Scientific Socialism

The immediate background to these clashes lay in the quite unanticipated appearance of soviets in the 1905 Russian revolution and the rise of syndicalism as a competitor to Marxism in Western Europe (and, with the rise of the IWW, America too).²⁵ It is significant also that both the Dutch and Russian trends were associated with philosophical (as well as political) heterodoxy—Pannekoek and Gorter promoted the monist 'religion of science' of Dietzgen, and Bogdanov the monist positivism of Mach. These philosophical deviations reflected the wish to find a role for collective subjectivity in politics which went beyond the limits imposed by 'scientific socialism', bringing them closer both to the syndicalist mystique of the working class as collectivity and the concomitant stress on activism (expressed in extreme form by Sorel).

After the Bolshevik revolution, left communists with philosophical inclinations turned away from the modified scientism of Dietzgen and Mach (with its stress on monism and the subjective factor in science), to full-scale Hegelianism, covered by the tribute paid to Hegel by Marx. Lukács and Korsch went far beyond reviving Hegel as a predecessor of Marx (turned into a materialist by being stood on his head) and integrated Hegelian concepts and methods into the heart of Marxism itself: especially those of 'totality' and 'subject'. In this way council communism appeared as a Marxist reformulation of syndicalist ideas and Western Marxism as a philosophical reformulation of scientific socialism. The link between the two was provided by the transformation of romantic, vitalist and libertarian forms of activism into the Hegelian categories of subjectivity and praxis as the expression of the self-consciousness of the proletariat as a class. At the same time, they instituted a much more radical break with classical Marxism and suffered a much more serious political defeat than their predecessors.

²⁴ For Bogdanov, see Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks*, Bloomington 1986 (which is also useful on Pannekoek, Gorter and Roland-Holst), as well as Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, Cambridge, 1970. See also Gombin, *The Radical Tradition*. Jacoby, op. cit., cites Korsch's observation that the post-war disputes in which he and Lukács were involved were 'only a weak echo of the political and tactical disputes that the two sides', by which Korsch meant Lenin, on one side, and Pannekoek and Gorter, on the other, 'had conducted so fiercely some years before'.

²⁵ I have not been able to find a good history of syndicalism, although Phil H. Goodstein, *The Theory of the General Strike from the French Revolution to Poland*, New York 1984, is full of interesting material. A number of books deal obliquely with the subject and there are also several national case studies.

However, like Western Marxism, council communism was revived in France after the Liberation, by the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group, who began a correspondence with the aged Pannekoek. Both the leaders of this group were ex-Trotskyists—Claude Lefort had joined the Fourth International after studying philosophy with Merleau-Ponty, and Cornelius Castoriadis was a Greek militant and economist, who left the Communist Party for Trotskyism during the German occupation of Greece, which he fled after the Civil War. Lefort and Castoriadis then left the Trotskyists to set up their own journal, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, in 1949. The Fourth International was the single organizational form of classical Marxism to survive the debacle of Stalinism, but after Trotsky's assassination it split into a number of fragments, divided over the analysis of the Soviet Union. Loyalists followed Trotsky in dubbing it a 'degenerated workers' state', while others judged it 'state capitalist'. A third path was taken by *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, who characterized the Soviet Union as a bureaucracy and came to see a convergence east and west towards competing bureaucratic state systems.

In 1958 *Socialisme ou Barbarie* split, over questions of self-organization, and Lefort left the group. Castoriadis remained the leading figure till its dissolution in 1966 (although there was another split in 1964 when Castoriadis abandoned Marxism).²⁶ Debord's contact with the group was primarily through Castoriadis who, it should be stressed, was not a philosopher but an economist, whose misgivings over orthodox Marxist theory began with the law of value. When revolution is uniformly against a bureaucratic class, east and west, there is in any case no pressing need for Marx's *Capital*. Debord, however, did not follow Castoriadis entirely out of Marxism, though he often blurs the distinction between bureaucracy and capitalism, if only because the Lukácsian side of his system would collapse back into its Weberian origins and antithesis if the Marxist concept of capital was removed.²⁷

Debord was able to take Lukács's ringing endorsement of the revolutionary workers' councils and transpose his critique of the Mensheviks to fit the Western Communist parties and the unions they controlled. ('Moreover, the function of the trade unions consists more in atomizing and depoliticizing the movement, in falsifying its relationship with the totality, while the Menshevik parties have more the role of fixing reification in the consciousness of the working class, both ideologically and organizationally.'²⁸) Debord had only to read 'Communist' for 'Menshevik' to fit a contemporary political analysis into the historic Lukácsian framework. But, for Debord, as for *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, the fact that the Communist party was bureaucratic in form and ideology, a force of order rather than revolution, meant, not that an alternative party should be built, but that the very idea of 'party' should be rejected. Instead of a party, necessarily separated from the working class, the revolution should be carried out by the workers themselves, organized in self-managing councils.

²⁶ See Lyotard, *op. cit.*, and Dick Howard's interview with Castoriadis in *Telus* 23, Spring 1975.

²⁷ The major issue in the split between Castoriadis and Debord seems to have been Debord's insistence on the abolition of labour.

²⁸ Georg Lukács, *op. cit.* My translation is from the French (which Debord used).

At the same time, the concept of revolution itself changed from the Leninist model. Instead of seeking state power, the councils should move directly to abolition of the state. The revolution meant immediate realization of the realm of freedom, abolition of all forms of reification and alienation in their totality, and their replacement by forms of untrammelled subjectivity. Thus the syndicalist spectre rose up again to haunt social democracy, fortified by the philosophical armoury of Western Marxism and carried, in accordance with Debord's temperament, to its extreme conclusion. Lukács had always assumed the existence of 'mediations' within the totality, forms of unity within difference, but Debord's maximalist vision sought to abolish all 'separation', to unite subject and object, practice and theory, structure and superstructure, politics and administration, in a single unmediated totality.

The Transformation of Everyday Life

The impetus behind this maximalism came from the idea of the transformation of everyday life. This in turn derived from Lefebvre's idea of 'total (that is, unalienated) man'. Lefebvre was the first French Marxist to revive the 'humanist' ideas of the Young Marx. Although he never questioned the privileged role of economics in Marxist theory, he began to argue that Marxism had been wrongly restricted to the domain of the economic and the political, and that its analysis should be extended to cover every aspect of life, wherever alienation existed—in private life, in leisure time, as well as at work. Marxism needed a topical sociology, it should be involved in cultural studies, it should not be afraid of the trivial. In the last analysis, Marxism meant, not only the transformation of economic and political structures, but 'the transformation of life right down to its detail, right down to its everydayness'. Economics and politics were only means to the realization of an unalienated, 'total' humanity.²⁹

Lefebvre began his intellectual career in the 1920s in close association with André Breton and the Surrealists. As a member of the *Philosophus* group, he co-signed the manifesto against the Riff war in 1925 and remained involved with the surrealists at least until his entry into the Communist Party in 1928 (though Breton denounces him by name in the *Second Surrealist Manifesto* of 1929 as base, insincere and opportunist—insults which Lefebvre did not forget when he vilified Breton in the *Critique of Everyday Life*).³⁰ In retrospect, personal and political quarrels aside, we can see how much Lefebvre owed to Breton—not only the idea of the transformation of everyday life, a fundamental surrealist concept, but even his introduction to Hegel and Marx.³¹ 'He showed me a book on his table, Vera's translation of Hegel's *Logic*, a very bad translation, and said something disdainfully of the sort: "You haven't even read this? A few days later, I began to read Hegel, who led me to Marx." ' Breton never

²⁹ For an account of Lefebvre's political and philosophical career, see Martin Jay, *op. cit.*

³⁰ See André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, Ann Arbor, 1969, and Henri Lefebvre's introduction to *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, Paris 1958. The habit of vitriolic denunciation of ex-comrades was inherited by the *si* and mars a great many of their pages. The reader often feels relieved that these writers never enjoyed real public power or influence.

³¹ See Martin Jay, *op. cit.*

swerved from his own attachment to Hegel: 'The fact remains that ever since I first encountered Hegel, that is, since I presented him in the face of the sarcasms with which my philosopher professor, around 1912, André Cresson, a positivist, pursued him, I have steeped myself in his views and, for me, his method has reduced all others to beggary. For me, where the Hegelian dialectic is not at work, there is no thought, no hope of truth.'³²

Historians of Western Marxism have tended to discount Breton, seeing him as 'off-beat' (!) or lacking in 'seriousness'.³³ Perhaps it is because, like Debord but unlike many other Western Marxists, he was never a professor. No doubt Breton's interpretation of Hegel, like his interpretations of Freud, of Marx, of love and of art (to name his major preoccupations), was often aberrant, but the fact remains that French culture is unthinkable without him. Not only did he develop a theory and practice of art which has had enormous effect (perhaps more than any other in our time), but he also introduced both Freud and Hegel to France, first to non-specialist circles, but then back into the specialized world through those he influenced (Lefebvre, Lacan, Bataille, Lévi-Strauss) and thence out again into the general culture.³⁴ Politically too, he was consistent from the mid-twenties on, joining and leaving the Communist Party on principled grounds, bringing support to Trotsky in his tragic last years and lustre to the beleaguered and often tawdry Trotskyist movement.³⁵

The 1920s was a period of dynamic avant-gardism, in many ways a displacement of the energy released by the Russian Revolution. Groups like the surrealists identified with the revolution and mimicked in their own organization many of the characteristics of Leninism: establishing a central journal, issuing manifestoes and agitational leaflets, guarding the purity of the group and expelling deviationists. (These characteristics, of course, carried through to the Situationists.) But there were many features of the surrealist movement—and, specifically, of Breton's thought—that distinguish it from other avant-garde groups and theorists of the time. Indeed, it might even be possible to think of surrealism as a form of 'Western avant-gardism', as opposed to the 'Soviet avant-gardism' which flourished not only in the Soviet Union (futurism, constructivism, Lef) but also in central Europe. Especially in Germany, there was a struggle between a Bauhaus and constructivist-oriented modernism (often explicitly Soviet-oriented too) and expressionism, which had affinities with surrealism but lacked both its originality and its theoretical foundation. Constructivism too had its reformist wing, closely tied to German social-democracy.

The Soviet avant-garde, like the surrealist, wanted to revolutionize art in

³² See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *La Bataille de cent ans: Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*, vol. 2, Paris 1986. This staggeringly informative book is indispensable for an understanding of French culture far beyond the bounds of psychoanalysis.

³³ Both Mark Poster and Martin Jay fail to understand the importance of surrealism. Neither Anderson nor Jacoby pays any attention to Breton and most of the standard discussions of Marxist 'aesthetics', let alone 'politics', prefer to steer rapidly away

³⁴ Within the Western Marxist tradition, Walter Benjamin was also greatly indebted to surrealism.

³⁵ The standard history remains Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, London 1968. Helena Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism*, New York 1988, provides a detailed chronicle of surrealist political activity

a sense that went beyond a simple change of form and content, and to alter its entire social role. But whereas Breton wanted to take art and poetry into everyday life, the aim in the Soviet Union was to take art into production. In both cases the bourgeois forms of art were to be suppressed, but the Soviet artists and theorists stressed the affinities of art with science and technology, tried to take art into modern industry and argued that artists should become workers or 'experts'. Beauty, dream, creativity were idle bourgeois notions. Art should find a productive function in the new Soviet society, and in its exercise, it would cease even to be art. 'Death to art, long live production!'³⁶ Thus the scientism of orthodox Marxism and the productivism of post-revolutionary Soviet ideology were imported into the world-view of the militant artist. But Breton's 'Western avant-gardism' went in the opposite direction, abhorring modern industry, anti-functional, deeply suspicious of one-sided materialism and positivism, dedicated to releasing the values of romantic and decadent poets from the confines of 'literature'—aestheticizing life, rather than productivizing art.

As did Lukács, Breton brought about an irruption of romanticism into Marxism, and, again as with Lukács, this both drew from a previous literary background and reflected a convert's enthusiasm for the drama of revolution.³⁷ But there were three significant differences between Breton and Lukács. First, Breton was himself a poet rather than a critic; for this reason, the problem of 'practice' was located for him directly within the sphere of art, and theory had a direct bearing on his own activity. Second, as a result of his training as a medical psychiatrist, he turned to Freud and integrated elements of psychoanalytic theory into his thought, before he made any formal approach to Marxism. In some ways Freud played the same kind of role for Breton that Simmel or Weber did for Lukács, but Breton's interest in Freud took him into the domain of psychology, whereas for Lukács the engagement was with sociology. Thus when Breton read Marx or Lenin, it was in relation to the mind, rather than society, as with Lukács. Thirdly, Breton, despite his Hegelianism, insisted always on retaining the specificity and autonomy of artistic revolution, intellectually and organizationally.

The 'Sovereignty of Thought'

Breton spelled out his position very clearly from the beginning. Thus in the *Second Surrealist Manifesto* he sets himself the question, 'Do you believe that literary and artistic output is a purely individual phenomenon? Don't you think that it can or must be the reflection of the main currents which determine the social and social evolution of humanity?' He rephrases the question in his answer—'The only question one can rightly raise concerning [literary or artistic output] is that of the *sovereignty of*

³⁶ From Rodchenko's memoirs, quoted in Vahan D. Barooshian, *Brik and Mayakovsky*, The Hague 1978. I have written about Soviet productivism elsewhere. See my *Readings and Writings*, London 1982.

³⁷ For the background to Lukács's Marxism, see Martin Jay, *op. cit.*; Michael Löwy, *George Lukács. From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, London 1979, and Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Marxism of the Early Lukács', *New Left Review* 70, reprinted in *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader*, ed. New Left Review, London 1977. For Breton and Freud, see Elisabeth Roudinesco, *op. cit.*

thought'—and concludes, quoting Engels, that art, as a mode of thought, is 'sovereign and limitless by its nature, its vocation, potentially and with respect to its ultimate goal in history, but lacking sovereignty and limited in each of its applications and in any of its several states'. Thus art 'can only oscillate between the awareness of its inviolate autonomy and that of its utter dependence.' The logic of Breton's argument presumes that it is the task of the social revolution to get rid of that limiting 'dependence' on economic and social determinations, but meanwhile art should fiercely guard its 'inviolable autonomy'. He goes on to dismiss the idea of proletarian art and concludes: 'Just as Marx's forecasts and predictions have proved to be accurate, I can see nothing which would invalidate a single word of Lautréamont's with respect to events of interest only to the mind.'³⁸

When he wrote this, Breton was still a Party member. It was not till 1933 that the break came, despite Breton's public support for Trotsky, his rift with Aragon over the subordination of art to party politics and his increasing exasperation at the cult of labour in the Soviet Union. (Thirion, a Communist surrealist, wrote, 'I say shit on all those counter-revolutionaries and their miserable idol, WORK!'—a position later taken up by the situationists.³⁹) After leaving the Party, his line remained constant. In the 1942 'Prolegomena to a third surrealist manifesto or not', he explains that theoretical systems 'can reasonably be considered to be nothing but tools on the carpenter's workbench. This carpenter is *you*. Unless you have gone stark raving mad, you will not try to make do without all those tools except one, and to stand up for the plane to the point of declaring that the use of hammers is wrong and wicked.' For Breton, Marxist and Freudian theory, like politics and art, were distinct but compatible, each with its own object and its own goals. Breton did not try to develop an integrated 'Freudo-marxism' (like Reich or Marcuse), but maintained the specificity of each in its own domain, psyche and society. It should be clear what the implications would be when the situationists later rejected Breton and accepted Lukács.⁴⁰

For Breton, the transformation of everyday life moved on a different time scale from that of the Revolution. It could take place, for *individuals*, here and now, however transiently and imperfectly. In Breton's interpretation of Freud, we find that everyday 'reality' can satisfy us all too little. As a result we are forced to act out our desires as fantasies, thus compensating for 'the insufficiencies of our actual existence'. But anyone 'who has any artistic gift', rather than retreating into fantasy or displacing repressed desires into symptoms, can 'under certain favourable conditions' sublimate desires into artistic creation, thus putting the world of desire in positive contact with that of reality, even managing to 'turn these desire-fantasies into reality'. In his book *Communicating Vessels* Breton describes how his dreams re-organize events of everyday life ('day's residues' in

³⁸ André Breton, *op. cit.*

³⁹ See André Thirion, *Revolutionaries without the Revolution*, London 1976.

⁴⁰ Debord's early interest in 'psycho-geography' reflects the influence of a traditional scientific psychology. See, for instance, P.-H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne*, Paris 1952, which despite its dedication to Marcel Mauss, relies on conventional statistical and empirical methods. It is also full of marvellous maps (which can be seen plagiarized in the pages of the *SI* journal).

Freudian terms) into new patterns, just as everyday life presents him with strange constellations of material familiar from his dreams.⁴¹ The two supposedly distinct realms are in fact 'communicating vessels'. Thus Breton does not argue for dreams over everyday life, or vice versa, but for their reciprocal interpermeation, as value and goal.

Breton's concept of everyday life reminds us of how Freud in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* mapped out the paths by which displaced desire (*Wunsch*) inscribed itself in everyday gestures and actions. Breton wanted to recast this involuntary contact between unconscious desire and reality with a voluntary form of communication, in which, as in poetry, the semantic resources of the unconscious, no longer dismissed, after Freud's work, as meaningless, were channeled by the artist, consciously lifting the bans and interdictions of censorship and repression, but not seeking consciously to control the material thus liberated. For Breton, Hegel provided the philosophical foundation for a rejection of dualism—there was no iron wall between subject and object, mind and matter, pleasure principle and reality principle, dream (everynight life, so to speak) and waking everyday life. We should be equally alert to the potential of reality in our dreams and fantasies, and of desire in our mundane reality. As Breton succinctly put it, the point was both to change the world and to interpret it.

In many ways, Breton was less hostile to the scientific approach than was Lukács, less engrained in his romanticism. For Lukács science ruled the realm of human knowledge of nature, whereas human history itself was the province of dialectical philosophy, of a coming to consciousness of the objective world which was simultaneously a coming to self-consciousness. Breton, on the other hand, was quite happy to accept the scientific status of historical materialism, with its objective laws and propositions about reality, provided equal status was given to poetry, with its allegiance to the unconscious, to the pleasure principle. Thus Breton was completely unconcerned by any concept of 'consciousness', class or otherwise. For him, there was the possibility of science—the concern of somebody else, since he lacked the totalizing spirit—and there was poetry, the field of unconscious desire, with which he was intensely concerned. It is no wonder that Breton's Hegelianism (based, we should remind ourselves, on the *Logic*) was so inimical and seemed so scandalously inept to the mainstream of Marxists and existentialists, who read Hegel, in contrast, through the *Phenomenology*, or through a totalizing theory of history.⁴²

Debord's rejection of surrealism focused mainly on the blind alleys and wrong turnings down which Breton's faith in the unconscious and belief in 'objective chance' (a phrase, incidentally, borrowed from Engels) came to lead him in his later years. Increasingly, Breton began to dabble distractedly in occultism, spiritualism and parapsychology, to become a magus rather than a poet. Debord's refusal to accept Breton's 'supernaturalism' led him to refuse any role to the unconscious and to be extremely sceptical about Freud in general. (In *The Society of the Spectacle* he

⁴¹ André Breton, *Les œuvres complètes*, Paris 1933.

⁴² Breton's Hegel was eventually superseded by Kojève's—even among those who had undergone Breton's influence.

toys with the idea of a 'social unconscious' and concludes, 'Where the economic *id* was, there *ego* [*le je*] must come about.'⁴³ Thus, in the 1950s Debord joined the Lettrist movement and then split from it to form the Revolutionary Lettrists with a few friends. Lettrism sought to go beyond the schism between abstract and figurative art (which marked West and East, as well as different trends within surrealist painting) by reintroducing the word into the sphere of the visual (*métagraphie*) in a kind of interzone between dadaist word collage and concrete poetry. Lettrists, under the leadership of Isidore Isou, also used a pseudo-technical vocabulary of neologism and sought to combine technical innovation with neo-dadaist scandal.⁴⁴

The Realization of Art

Despite opting for Lettrism rather than Surrealism, Debord was still able to collaborate with the Belgian surrealists around *Les Livres Nous*, in the late fifties, and he continued to recognize the legacy he had inherited from surrealism, albeit in mutilated form, while also striving to supersede it, to go beyond the 'realization' of art to its 'suppression', that is, its integration into the totality through its own self-negation. What this meant in effect was both the inversion of Surrealism (the ego, rather than censoring unconscious desire, consciously freeing the self from the determinism of the unconscious) and the displacement of the surrealist notion of poetic freedom, as the uncompromising release of repressed desire, into the practical and conventionally political register of council communism. This displacement also involved, of course, a semantic shift in the meaning of the word 'desire' (from unconscious to conscious) which enabled the SI to endorse the surrealist slogan, 'Take your desires for reality', adopted by the Enragés at Nanterre (rather than the suspect 'Power to the imagination', launched by the 22 March group).⁴⁵ The poetic revolution *must be* the political revolution and vice versa, unconditionally and in full self-consciousness.

However, the Lettrist International around Debord was not the only channel by which surrealist, and Marxist, thought reached the Situationist International. The artists from the Cobra movement brought with them their own revision of surrealism and their own political positions and theories. Asger Jorn, in particular, was not only a prolific artist and dedicated organizer, but also a compulsive writer and theorist. The first phase of the SI was marked as much by Jorn as by Debord, and though Jorn resigned from the group in 1961, his influence was lasting. He was never criticized or denounced by Debord, either through the period of the schism (when Jorn collaborated with both parties, under different false names) or during the highly politicized period before and after 1968. Debord paid a moving posthumous tribute to his old comrade (Jorn died in 1973) in his introductory essay to *'Le jardin d'Albisola'* (1974), a book of

⁴³ A *déconstruement* of Lacan.

⁴⁴ The Lettrists returned to dadaism and 'modernized' dadaist techniques in the name of artistic research, while maintaining the dadaist penchant for scandal.

⁴⁵ See the last number of the SI journal.

photographs of the ceramic garden Jorn had built in Albisola, Northern Italy, in the late fifties, the time of their first contact.⁴⁶

Cobra (the name originates from the initial letters of Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) was formed by a group of artists from Denmark, Holland and Belgium (including Jorn and Constant) in November 1948.⁴⁷ In broad terms, Cobra grew from the disenchantment with surrealism of artists whose political ideas were formed during the Resistance. After Breton returned to Paris, he took a militantly anti-Communist line politically and sought to re-impose his own views and tastes on surrealist groups which had flourished independently during his exile. These artists were unwilling to break with Communist comrades with whom they had worked in the struggle against the German occupation and wanted to see surrealism move forward onto new, experimental ground, rather than revive pre-war trends, especially towards abstraction in painting and 'super-naturalism' in ideology.

After the Liberation, groups of French and Belgian Communists split from Breton to form the Revolutionary Surrealist movement, but then split among themselves over how to respond to Communist Party attacks on even pro-Communist surrealism (the French wanted to dissolve the group, the Belgians not) and over abstract art (the French in favour, the Belgians against). Meanwhile, Christian Dotremont, a poet and leader of the Belgian fraction, had made contact with Jorn, Constant and their friends. They too had been formed by the Resistance and were active in small avant-garde groups. At the end of the war, Jorn returned to Paris (where he had studied with Léger and worked with Le Corbusier in the late thirties). There he met members of the French surrealist movement who later joined the Revolutionary Surrealists, and also Constant, with whom he struck up a friendship. He even went on a pilgrimage to visit André Breton, who dubbed him 'Swedenborgian', but reportedly, 'got lost in the labyrinth of theories delivered sometimes rather abruptly in Jorn's gravelly French'. There had already been a definite surrealist influence on Danish painting, but of a diluted, eclectic and stylized kind. Despite his initial sympathy and interest, Jorn felt the need to find a new direction.⁴⁸

Later the same year (December 1946) Jorn went north to Lapland to spend time in retreat, reading and writing, developing the outlines of a heterodox Marxist theory of art. Before the war, Jorn had been deeply influenced by the Danish syndicalist, Christian Christensen, and he continued to honour Christensen, paying homage to him in the pages of the *Situationist International* many decades later. During the Resistance Jorn left syndicalism for communism, but he always retained the libertarian principles he had learned from Christensen, as well as a faith in direct action and collective work. The theoretical project Jorn set himself was

⁴⁶ Asger Jorn, *Le jardin d'Albisola*, with an introductory essay by Guy Debord. Jorn wrote the introductory essay for Debord's *Contre le cinéma*, where he compares Debord to Godwin.

⁴⁷ See Jean-Clarence Lambert, op. cit.

⁴⁸ See Jens Jørgen Thorsen, *Modernisme*, Copenhagen 1965. Thorsen was a leading figure in the second Situationist International.

massive and arduous. Essentially he wanted to recast elements from surrealism (magic, child art, 'primitive' art, automatism) and combine these with strong strands of Scandinavian romanticism and libertarian activism within a materialist and Marxist framework.⁴⁹

The Nordic Attraction

He began by defining materialism in relation to nature. Materialist art would express the natural being of humans as well as their social being. It would be on the side of instinctive vitality and would involve physical gesture. European art was vitiated by its classical heritage, its metaphysical overvaluation of reason and the ideal. The 'materialist attitude to life' must involve the expression of natural rhythms and passions, rather than seeking to subordinate activity to a sovereign reason or engage in the unnatural and slavish copying of nature. Materialist art, therefore, was Dionysiac rather than Apollonian; it was on the side of festival and play — 'spontaneity, life, fertility and *movement*'. Jorn consistently attacked classicism (and its surrogates, realism and functionalism) and favoured instead the 'Oriental' and the 'Nordic', which he associated with ornament and magical symbolism respectively. (It is interesting that Breton, in the *First Manifesto of Surrealism*, also celebrates the Nordic and the Oriental as privileged fields for the 'marvellous'.) The Nordic especially fascinated Jorn, who worked closely with the eminent Professor Glob and other scholars on studies of prehistoric and ancient Scandinavian society and art.⁵⁰ Jorn believed that the intensively local and extensively cosmopolitan should mutually reinforce each other.

Jorn never really completed his theoretical task, though he published a vast number of articles and books, besides leaving many unpublished manuscripts. He wrestled continuously with the problems of the dialectic, drawing, not directly on Hegel, but on Engels's *Dialectic of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*. He tended to reduce the dialectic to the simple combination of opposites into a unity, and then he uncertain how to unsettle this new synthesis which itself threatened to develop in a one-sided way. In the end he even invented a new logic of 'trialectics'! There is an aspect to Jorn's theoretical work which is reminiscent of Dietzgen or Bogdanov, an attraction to forms of mystical monism, as he strives to reconcile Kierkegaard or Swedenborg with Engels and the dialectic of nature. Often too he seems caught between the constraints of system-building and spontaneous impulses towards provocation and proliferation, which spring no doubt from his libertarian background.

Constant, though rather more sparing in his prose, developed a line of thought similar to that of Jorn, but much simpler. For Constant, surrealism had been right in its struggle against constructivism ('objective

⁴⁹ See Graham Birtwistle, *Living Art*, Utrecht 1986. This extremely important book gives a comprehensive account of Jorn's thought and writings during the formative pre-Cobra years and offers a number of insights on how these developed later. It draws extensively on both published and unpublished manuscripts. For a full bibliography of Jorn, see Per Horman Hansen, *Bibliografi over Asger Jorns skrifter*, Silkeborg 1988.

⁵⁰ P. V. Glob's *The Beg People*, Ithaca 1969, is a work of great charm and distinction which provides an English-language introduction to his writings. He contributed to many journals with which Jorn was associated.

formalism') but had become too intellectualized. It was necessary to find new ways of expressing the impulse that lay behind surrealism in order to create a popular, libertarian art. In his painting, Constant, like Jorn, developed a style which was neither abstract nor realist, but used figurative forms that drew on child art and the motifs of magical symbolism, without effacing the differentiating trace of physical gestures. For both Constant and Jorn, art was always a process of research, rather than the production of finished objects. Both were influenced by libertarian syndicalism—Jorn through Christensen, Constant in the Dutch tradition of Pannekoek and Gorter. They stressed the role of the creative impulse, of art as an expression of an attitude to life, dynamic and disordered like a popular festival, rather than a form of ideational production.

In Brussels, Christian Dotremont was, of course, much closer than Jorn or Constant to surrealism, much more influenced by French culture.²⁴ The Cobra group in general had an ambivalent relationship with Paris. Dotremont, as the closest, perhaps experienced this love-hate most intensely. In the immediate post-war years he was attracted immediately to Lefebvre's critique of everyday life. Lefebvre seemed to offer the possibility of an alternative to surrealism and existentialism, which was communist without being orthodox. Art should pair itself with the critical spirit to transform consciousness through 'experiments on everyday life'. At the same time, Dotremont was deeply influenced by Bachelard, whose works on poetic reverie and the four elements had been appearing through the early forties. Bachelard stressed the distinction between images of perception and those of the active imagination, which allowed us to see, for instance, figures and scenes in the flames of the fireplace or the whorls of wood. For Cobra artists, Bachelard pointed to a third path between realism and the delineation of purely mental dreams and fantasies by one section of surrealist painters, while also avoiding the abstraction of the rest of the surrealists. Jorn too, after he was introduced to Bachelard's work, was deeply impressed. At the museum he instituted at Silkeborg in Denmark, there is a startling and magnificent 'portrait' of Bachelard, one of the few he ever painted.

Success and Failure

Cobra thus brought together elements from surrealism, a commitment to revolutionary politics, and an openness to experiment and new ideas, a determination to make art which was materialist, festive and vital. Cobra wanted to displace the three major contenders in the Paris art-world: the decomposing School of Paris (which sought to unite a refined cubism with a pallid fauvism), orthodox Bretonian surrealism, and the various forms of abstract and non-figurative art. By the time the movement dissolved in 1951, after only three years of existence, it had both succeeded triumphantly and failed miserably. It triumphed historically, but failed in its immediate aims, in that it proved impossible at that time either to set up alternative art centres to Paris or to conquer the Paris art-world from

²⁴ For Dotremont, see the works on Cobra, cited above, and José Vovelle, *Le Surréalisme en Belgique*, Brussels 1972. Belgian surrealism developed independently from French and was divided between various groups, relatively de-politicized like those round Magritte and heavily politicized, as was Dotremont.

the outside. Although many of the Cobra artists stayed in loose touch, the group broke up organizationally and geographically. Jorn and Constant both ended up in the situationist movement (which underwent the same problems between Paris and the Cobra capitals). In the end, of course, Cobra was recognized at its full value, but not until Paris was finally displaced as an art centre, first by New York, then by a redistribution of influence within Europe (and eventually between Europe and New York).³² The immediate reasons for the break-up of the group were organizational and political, personal and material. The Danish group pursued a life of its own (like ostriches, Dotremont complained, in contrast to the French, who were often more like giraffes, with their heads held high in the air); the Dutch and the Belgians began to drift to Paris, and Paris, in turn, began to absorb elements of Cobra back into the mainstream; personal difficulties (Jorn went off with Constant's wife) threatened to divide close friends. The Cobra artists were often literally starving. Jorn described in a letter to Dotremont how he and his family were forced to 'sleep on the floor so that we don't have to buy a bed' in a studio without gas or electricity. Both Jorn and Dotremont suffered from tuberculosis, a disease promoted and aggravated by poverty, and at the time of Cobra's dissolution they were both hospitalized in the same clinic in Denmark.

Political problems played a part too. The Cobra artists were militant in the Communist Party (Dotremont) or sympathetic to it, even if inactive (Constant, Jorn). But the brief heyday of the Liberation was soon halted by the tightening grip of Stalinism and the beginnings of the Cold War. When Cobra was formed and held its first exhibition, in March 1949, it had friendly relations with the Communist parties. Cobra was able to maintain contact with the parallel ex-surrealist Bloc group in Czechoslovakia, even after the 1948 seizure of power by the Communists in Prague. In 1949, however, with the persistence of the Berlin blockade, the formation of NATO, the declaration of the Federal Republic of Germany and the ever-increasing pressure against Tito from the Soviet Union, Revolutionary Surrealist and Cobra artists began to feel themselves squeezed, caught in an untenable position. Later that year Dotremont tried unavailingly to stake out a claim for artistic autonomy at the Communist-controlled Salle Pleyel peace congress in Paris, and in November matters came to a head at the Cobra exhibition in Amsterdam, at the Stedelijk Museum. The wave of purges and show-trials had already begun in Eastern Europe and Dotremont's second attempt, at an experimental poetry reading, to clarify his political position led to barracking, forcible ejections and fist-fights. 'When the words *Soviet* and *Russian* were mentioned, that brought the house down. . . . There was an indescribable uproar, anti-Soviet jeers and anti-French insults flying.' Or as he put it in his reading: '*La merde, la merde, toujours recommencé.*'³³ Cobra found itself caught in the crossfire between Communists and anti-Communists.

Dotremont, Constant and Jorn reacted to their dilemma in different ways.

³² Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Chicago 1983, was the first pioneering study of the interlock between the art market, art movements and global political power. Further work is badly needed to bring the story up to the present.

³³ See Lambert, op cit

Dotremont eventually became disenchanted with politics altogether and began to take the first steps towards de-politicizing the movement. Constant and Jorn disagreed. In a world in which 'politics are (not without our complicity) put between us and the Universe like barbed wire', it was all the more important to struggle to maintain a genuine and direct relationship between art and politics, to reject stultifying labels and ideological prejudices—'Experimentation in these conditions has a historical role to play: to thwart prejudice, to unclog the senses, to unbutton the *uniforms of fear*'.³⁴ However, Constant and Jorn interpreted that historical role differently. Constant began to move out of painting altogether, collaborating with the Dutch architect, Aldo van Eyck, and then, after the dissolution of Cobra, moving to London and devoting himself to research into experimental urbanism and city-planning. Constant sought an art that would be public and collective in a way that easel painting could never be, a transposition into contemporary terms of the idea of the communal, festive use of space. Jorn persisted in painting, after his recovery from TB, but was eager to find a way of reviving the Cobra project in a purer, more advanced form: a hope realized with the foundation of the SI after his meeting with Debord (in many ways, a second Dotremont, less problematic in some ways but, as it turned out, in others more).

Looking back at the Cobra movement, it is possible now to see many points of similarity between Cobra attitudes and those of Jackson Pollock or De Kooning (who often looks like a displaced mutant of Dutch Cobra). Pollock, like Jorn, extolled the spontaneous, the vital, the ornamental (in Jorn's sense of the 'arabesque'). His background too was in political mural art, which he rejected for a new approach, indebted to surrealism but departing from it.³⁵ Like Jorn he was influenced by indigenous ritual art—Indian sand painting and totems, rather than Viking runes and ancient petroglyphs. Pollock's *Blue Poles* can be measured with Jorn's great *Stalingrad*, now in Silkeborg. If Jorn always resisted the pull of abstraction, it was largely because of his political commitment, the quest for an art which would be neither bourgeois, Stalinist ('socialist realist') nor surrealist. Art, for Jorn, should always retain both the 'social' and the 'realist' pole, or else it would be undialectical, one-sided, metaphysical. Jorn's experience of the Resistance and the vicissitudes of the Cold War in Europe prevented the headlong slide into individualist abstraction of his American counterparts (ideologically counterposed to Soviet socialist realism in Cold War terms).

Jorn's Ideal Bauhaus

After leaving a Swiss sanatorium, in 1954, Jorn began to visit Italy for his health, and because it was relatively a cheap place to live. Indefatigable as ever, he had founded the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus while still in the clinic, and soon he was able to combine some of the old Cobra artists with new Italian friends, drawn first from the Nuclear Painting movement, led by Enrico Baj, and then (after 1955) the group gathered around Pinot Gallizio in Alba. This new venture of Jorn's began after he was approached by the Swiss artist, Max Bill, who had been given the job

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Jorn had studied with Léger, as had Pollock with Benton and Siqueiros.

of setting up the new *Hochschule für Gestaltung* in Ulm, which was planned as a 'new Bauhaus'. At first Jorn was enthusiastic about the project, but he soon found himself in violent disagreement with Bill, who was linked to the 'Concrete Art' movement of geometrical abstractionists and wanted the new Bauhaus to provide training in a technological approach to art, an updated re-run of the old productivist model. Soon Jorn was writing to Baj that 'a Swiss architect, Max Bill, has been given the job of restructuring the Bauhaus where Klee and Kandinsky taught. He wants to reproduce an academy without painting, without any research in the field of the image, fictions, signs and symbols, simply technical instruction.'⁵⁶ As the references to Klee and Kandinsky suggest, this was in many respects a repeat of the controversies which had divided the old Bauhaus, when Moholy-Nagy was appointed and productivism triumphed.

Jorn was in favour of an ideal Bauhaus which would bring together artists in a collective project, in the spirit of William Morris or the Belgian socialist, Vandervelde, who had inspired Gropius. But he was resolutely opposed to functionalism and what he regarded as a moralistic rationalism that threatened to exclude spontaneity, irregularity and ornament in the name of order, symmetry and puritanism. The polemic against the technological thinking of Bill brought Jorn to formulate a theoretical and polemical counterattack, on the grounds of general aesthetics and urbanism. At the 1954 Triennale of Industrial Design in Milan, Jorn engaged in public debate with Bill on the theme of 'Industrial Design in Society'. Jorn argued that the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier had been revolutionary in their day, but they had been wrong in subordinating aesthetics to technology and function, which had inevitably led towards standardization, automation, and a more regulated society.⁵⁷ Thus Jorn began to venture into areas which brought him closer again to Constant, as well as to the Lettrist International, who were simultaneously developing their own theories of unitary urbanism, psychogeography and *dérive*.

In 1955 Jorn met Pinot Gallizio, who had been a partisan during the war, was now an independent left councilman in his hometown of Alba and shared Jorn's interests in popular culture and archaeology. Together they set up an Experimental Laboratory as a prototype Imaginist Bauhaus, libertarian (without teachers or pupils, but only co-workers), aiming to unite all the arts and committed to an anti-productivist aesthetic. In this context, Pinot Gallizio began to develop his new experimental paints and painting techniques, drawing on his background as a chemist, and Jorn began to devote himself to collaborative works in ceramics and tapestry, seeking a contemporary style for traditional crafts and expanding his painting to new materials and forms. The next year, Pinot Gallizio and Jorn organized a conference in Alba, grandly entitled the 'First World Congress of Free Artists', which was attended by both Constant and Gil Wolman, representative of the Lettrist International (though Debord himself did not attend). Wolman addressed the Congress, proposing common action between the Imaginist Bauhaus and the Lettrist International, citing Jorn, Constant and the Belgian surrealist Marien approvingly in his speech, as well as expounding the idea of unitary urbanism. The stage was now set for the foundation of the Situationist International.

⁵⁶ Mirella Bandini, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Besides a common approach to urbanism, there were other issues that linked Jorn, Pinot-Gallizio and Constant with the Lettrist International: a revolutionary political position, independent of both Stalinism and Trotskyism and their artistic correlates (socialist realism and orthodox surrealism), a dedicated seriousness about the theory and goals of art combined with an unswerving avant-gardism, and a common interest in the transformation of everyday life, in festivity, in play and in waste or excess (as defined by the norms of a purposive rationalism). The journal of the Lettrist International was called *Podlatch*, after the great feasts of the Northwest Coast Indians of Canada and Alaska in which the entire wealth of a chief was given away or even 'wastefully' destroyed. Described by Boas (and his native informants) and then by Marcel Mauss in his classic *The Gift*, the idea had fascinated both Bataille and Lefort, of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, who reviewed Mauss's book in *Les Temps Modernes* when it was re-issued after the war. Podlatch was taken to exemplify the opposite of an exchange or market economy—objects were treated purely as gifts rather than as commodities, in the setting of a popular feast.⁵⁸ Generosity and waste rather than egotism and utility determined their disposal.

The theme of festivity is linked, for Jorn, with that of play. In his 1948 'Magic and the Fine Arts' Jorn observed that 'if play is continued among adults in accordance with their natural life-force, i.e., in retaining its creative spontaneity, then it is the *content* of ritual, its humanity and life, which remains the primary factor and the form changes uninterruptedly, therefore, with the living content. But if play lacks its vital purpose, then ceremony fossilizes into an empty form which has no other purpose than its own formalism, the *observance of forms*.' Festivity is thus ritual vitalized by play. In the same way, the formal motif of art must be vitalized by the creative figure, the play of calligraphy. This concept of play linked Jorn closely to Constant, who was deeply influenced by Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, published in Holland just before the war.⁵⁹ Huizinga argued that man should be seen not simply as *homo faber* (man as maker) or *homo sapiens* (man as thinker) but also as *homo ludens* (man as player). He traces the role of play both in popular festivities and in art—in the rhythms of music and dance, as well as masks, totems and 'the magical mazes of ornamental motifs'. Huizinga's thought converged in France with that of Roger Caillois, who also made the link to festival and thence to leisure: 'Vacation is the successor of the festival. Of course, this is still a time of expenditure and free activity, when regular work is interrupted, but it is a phase of *relaxation* and not of *paroxysm*.'⁶⁰ Play too had a crucial place in Breton's thought and also figured in Sartre's. In the background, of course, was Schiller's celebration of play in his 'On the Aesthetic Education of Man'.

In 1957 the Situationist International was proclaimed at Cosio d'Arroscia

⁵⁸ See *Podlatch*, ed. Guy Debord, Paris 1985.

⁵⁹ *Homo Ludens* was published in Haarlem in 1937, translated into German and published in Switzerland in 1944, and then re-translated into English and synthesized with Huizinga's own incomplete English language version (made shortly before his death in 1945). This new English version was published in London in 1949. A French translation was published in Paris in 1951.

⁶⁰ *Le collage de sociologie*, ed. Denis Hollier, Minnesota 1985. See also Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, Glencoe 1961.

and the collaboration between Jorn and Debord was sealed by the publication of a jointly composed book (a successor both to Cobra 'writing with two hands' and Lettrist 'metagraphie'). This work, *Fin de Copenhague*, like *Mémoires* published two years later, in 1959, was both a *déroulement* of found images and words, and a piece of impromptu, spontaneous, collective work in the festive spirit.⁶¹ The common ground between the different currents in the Situationist International was reinforced and enriched by theoretical publication in the journal and by joint artistic projects. These established both an enlarged aesthetic scope and a clarified political direction, to which all the parties could contribute. The next task was to make a dramatic intervention in the art-world and this was achieved in 1959, when both Jorn and Pinot Gallizio held exhibitions in Paris in May, and Constant followed at the Stedelijk in Amsterdam.

Between Pollock and Kitsch

Jorn's show of *Modifications* was intended, in a startlingly original manner, to position his work not only within the situationist context of *déroulement*, but also between Jackson Pollock and kitsch (the two antinomic poles proposed by Clement Greenberg, who valued them as 'good' and 'evil' respectively) in a gesture which would transcend the duality of the two. In his catalogue notes, Jorn stressed that an artwork was always simultaneously an object and an intersubjective communication, a sign.⁶² The danger for art was that of falling back into being simply an object, an end in itself. On the one hand, Pollock produced paintings which were objectified traces of an 'act in itself', through which he sought to realize his own self in matter for his own pleasure, rather than as the realization of an intersubjective link. The action of painting failed to be effective as an act of communication. On the other hand, the anonymous kitsch paintings which Jorn bought in the market were merely objects in themselves with no trace of subjective origin at all, simply free-floating in time and space. By overpainting them in his own hand, Jorn sought to restore a subjectivity to them, to reintegrate them into a circuit of communication, a dialectic of subject and object.⁶³

Jorn characterized Pollock as an 'oriental' painter (on the side of abstract ornament) and the kitsch works as 'classical' (on the side of representation, both idealizing and naturalistic). In the past, Jorn had himself taken the side of the 'oriental' against the 'classical'. Thus he commented on the Laocoön, 'Laocoön's fate—the fate of the upper class', identifying the snakes (the serpentine, oriental line) with the natural, the materialist, the revolutionary classes, and the representation of Laocoön (the classical form) with the ideal, with repression and sublimation. However, in the case of his own 'Modifications', Jorn characterized his project as 'nordic' rather than 'oriental', going beyond the 'oriental'/'classical' antinomy. Here the 'nordic', separated out and set over and against the 'oriental', implied the use of 'symbolic' motifs rather than abstract ornament. Thus

⁶¹ *Fin de Copenhague* was re-published in Paris 1985. For 'Memoires' see Marcus, op cit.

⁶² Asger Jorn, *Modifications*, Paris 1959. See also Mirella Bandini, op. cit.

⁶³ For another sympathetic view of kitsch from within the Marxist tradition, see Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, Cambridge 1988.

the paintings were magical actions which revitalized dead objects through subjective inscription, transforming them into living signs (collectively appropriated motifs, which were also spontaneously subjective figures). The kitsch paintings were not simply *détournés* but were sacrificial objects in a festive fertility rite. Objectified beings were broken open, vandalized and mutilated to release the 'becoming' latent within them.

At the same time, Jorn saw the 'Modifications' as a celebration of kitsch. It was only because kitsch was popular art that a living kernel could still be found in it. In his very first contribution to the Danish art magazine *Helhesten*, during the war, Jorn had written in praise of kitsch, in his essay 'Intimate Banalities' (1941). Jorn wanted to get beyond the distinction between 'high' and 'low' art. While his sympathies were always on the side of the 'low' in its struggle against the 'high', Jorn also wanted to unite the two dialectically and supersede the split between the two, which deformed all human subjectivity. In this article he praised both the collective rage for celluloid flutes which swept a small Danish town (trivial, yet festive) and the work of a tattoo artist (an ornamental supplement, both mutilation and creation, like that of the 'Modifications' themselves). Further, in combining 'high' with 'low', Jorn also wanted to deconstruct the antinomy of 'deep' and 'shallow'. In 'Magic and the Fine Arts', he had long previously remarked how 'today we are unable to create general artistic symbols as the expression of more than a single individual reality. Modern artists have made desperate attempts to do this. The basic problem is that a general concept must be created by the people themselves as a communal reality, and today we do not have that kind of fellowship among the people which would allow that. If the artist has plumbed the depths, like Klee, he has lost his contact with the people, and if he has found a popular means of expression, like Mayakovsky, he has, in a tragic way, betrayed the deeper side of himself, because a people's culture which combines the surface issues with the deeper things does not exist.' Thus, for Jorn, the deconstruction of antinomies could only be fully realized through social change, but in the meantime, artistic gestures like those of the 'Modifications' could symbolically enact their possibility and thus help form the missing fellowship.

Finally, for Jorn, revitalization was also revaluation. The act of modification restored value as well as meaning. Here, Jorn returned implicitly to the Marxist theory of value, which he was to develop in a personal way. Jorn (in a way reminiscent of Bataille's postulate of a 'general economy' which incorporated a domain of excess excluded from the 'restricted' economy of exchange and utility) reformulated the Marxist formula C-M-C into the expanded N-U-C-M-C-N-U (nature-use-commodity-money) as the formula for a socialist economy, in which the economic cycle was contained in the natural cycle, transforming 'economic utility' into 'natural use'.⁶⁴ Jorn always insisted that Marxism was not simply the theory of exploitation as the general form of extraction of a surplus, because a surplus was necessary for socialist society, if it was to go beyond functionalism and utility to excess and luxurious enjoyment, the social forms of creative, playful ornament. Socialism was ultimately based on

⁶⁴ See Jorn, *Critique de la politique économique*, Paris 1960, summarized in Richard Gombin, *The Radical Tradition*, London 1978.

natural rights, and the realm of freedom on the reintegration of history into nature. Thus the transformation of paintings as commodities (objects bought in the market) into sites of spontaneous, natural creativity, the revaluation of exchange value as natural use value, was itself a prefiguration of a truly communal society.

Gallizio and Constant

Pinot Gallizio and Constant followed different paths. Rather than seeking, like Jorn, to reinscribe unalienated creativity into easel painting itself, albeit in an original, dialectical form, they each began to push beyond the limits of easel painting. For Pinot Gallizio, the economy of standardization and quantity, of unending sameness, must be superseded by a civilization of 'standard-luxury', marked by unending diversity. Machines would be playful, in the service of *homo ludens* rather than *homo faber*. Free time, rather than being filled with banality and brain-washing, could be occupied in creating brightly painted *autostrade* (freeways), massive architectural and urbanistic constructions, fantastic palaces of synesthesia, the products of 'industrial poetry', sites of 'magical-creative-collective' festivity. His exhibition in Paris was designed as the prototype cell of such a civilization. The gallery was draped all over, walls, ceiling and floor, with paintings produced by Pinot Gallizio's pioneering techniques of 'industrial poetry'. The exhibition was to use mirrors and lights to create the effect of a labyrinth, filled with violent colours, perfumes and music, producing a drama which would transform visitors into actors. Pinot Gallizio's aim, encouraged by Debord, was to create in one *ambiance* a premonitory fragment of his totalizing futurist vision.⁶⁵

Constant's 'New Babylon' project was similar to Pinot Gallizio's in its conceptual basis, but very different in its style. In his essay 'The Great Game To Come' ('Le Grand Jeu à Venir', published in 1959) Constant called for a playful rather than functional urbanism, a projection into the imaginary future of the discoveries made by the Lettrist method of *dérive*, drifting journeys through actually existing cities to experience rapid, aimless changes of environment ('*ambiances*') and consequent changes of psychological state.⁶⁶ Constant had been inspired by Pinot Gallizio, who had become the political representative of the gypsies who visited Alba, to build a model for a nomadic encampment. From this he developed to building architectural models of a visionary city ('New Babylon'), as well as making blueprints, plans and elevations, moving out of painting altogether. Sceptical of the prospect of immediate political change, Constant set about planning the urban framework for a possible post-revolutionary society of the future. New Babylon was devised on the assumption of a technologically advanced society in which, through the development of automation, alienated labour had been totally abolished and humanity could devote itself entirely to play. It would be the ceaselessly changing, endlessly dramatic habitat of *homo ludens*, a vast chain of

⁶⁵ Mirella Bandini, op. cit. Among later painters, both Merz and Pistoletto were influenced by Gallizio early in their careers and pay tribute to him in Mirella Bandini's monograph.

⁶⁶ See Mirella Bandini, op. cit. For a bibliography of Constant, see Jean-Clarence Lambert, op. cit.

megastructures each of which could be internally re-organized at will to satisfy the desires of its transient users and creators.⁶⁷

Thus the Situationist International launched itself into the art-world, in Paris and Amsterdam, with exceptional ambition and bravura. Not only were the works formally path-breaking, pushing up to and beyond the limits of painting, but their stakes, their theoretical engagement, went far beyond the contemporary discourse of art and aesthetics in its implications. It would be easy to look at Jorn's 'Modifications', for instance, as premonitions of post-modern 'hybridity', but this would be to miss their theoretical and political resolve, their emergence out of and subordination to Jorn's general revolutionary project. There had not been such a fruitful interchange between art, theory and politics since the 1920s. Yet, despite this, the Situationist intervention in the art-world hardly lasted a year. In the summer of 1960 Pinot Gallizio was expelled (he died in 1964) and Constant resigned, both as a result of disagreements and denunciations stemming from contacts they and/or their associates made in the art-world, outside the framework of the SI. In April of the next year, 1961, Jorn resigned, as part of the upheaval which led to the schism of 1962, when Nash and the German *Spur* group of artists (who had joined in 1959) were ousted and set up the dissident Second Situationist International and Situationist Bauhaus, which have lasted up to today, maintaining the project of a situationist art, with vivid flares of provocation and festivity.⁶⁸

The refusal by Debord and his supporters of any separation between

⁶⁷ For Constant's influence see Reyner Banham, *Megastructure*, London 1981, which cites the Beaubourg museum in Paris as a spin-off.

⁶⁸ In 1961 Jorn, Nash and Srid founded the Bauhaus Situationiste in Sweden. In February 1962 the *Spur* group and then in March the Nash group were expelled from the SI. These expelled groups formed the kernel of the Second Situationist International, founded later the same year. The Bauhaus Situationiste still thrives, continuing to produce publications, sponsor events and agitate for a situationist path in art, under the guidance of Nash and Srid. The Second SI has been a more notional body, but has never been dissolved. Nash, of course, is the doyen of Danish poets and his unflagging energy has kept the standard of artistic rebellion flying, not only through these organizations, but through the journal *Drakdykker* and his involvement in the Co-Ritus group (with Thorsen and others) and the Little Mermaid scandal. See *Situationist i Kædet*, cited above. In his foreword to this book, Patric O'Brian (Ager Jorn) writes as follows: 'The anti-art of the late 1950s and early sixties stated that visual art was a useless medium for creativity and thinking. It was the radiation of art into pure existence, into social life, into urbanism, into action and into thinking which was regarded as the important thing. The start of situationism, the foundation of the First Internationale Situationniste in 1957, was a reflection of this thinking. The motto "Réaliser la Philosophie" (sic) was a starting-point for situationist anti-art. But it caused also violent discussions in the First Situationist International. Opposing this point of view Srid, Nash and Thorsen among others in 1962 founded the Second Internationale Situationniste. These five situationists, Srid, Prem, Thorsen, Magnus, Nash, are all aiming to place art in new social connections. They are fully aware of the possibilities of artistic radiation. Far from creating any feeling of anti-art in their minds, this point of view gives visual arts a far more central position in their experiments.' Also associated with the Second SI was Jacqueline de Jong, who produced the *Situationist Times*. She was one of the few women closely associated with the situationists, who, like other avant-garde groups, marginalized, undervalued and overlooked women both in their own circle and in society at large. Indeed the SI journal blatantly reproduces images of women as 'spectacle'.

artistic and political activity, which precipitated the schism, led in effect, not to a new unity within situationist practice but to a total elimination of art, except in propagandist and agitational forms. In fact, the SI simply reappropriated the orthodox Marxist and Leninist triad of theory, propaganda, agitation, which structured Lenin's *What Is to be Done?*, while making every effort to avoid the model of leadership that went with Leninism. Theory displaced art as the vanguard activity, and politics (for those who wished to retain absolutely clean hands) was postponed till the day when it would be placed on the agenda by the spontaneous revolt of those who executed rather than gave orders. *Mirabile dictu*, that day duly came, to the surprise of the situationists as much as anyone else, and the uprising was ignited, to an extent, by the impact of the preceding years of 'theoretical practice'. The problem remained that the revolutionary subjectivity that irrupted into the objectified 'second nature' of the society of the spectacle came from nowhere and vanished again whence it came. In terms of situationist theory it represented a paroxysmic expansion and collapse of consciousness, detached from the historical process which faced the subject, before, during and after, as an essentially undifferentiated negative totality.⁶⁹

The Post-'68 Labyrinths

In a strange way, the two legendary theoretical mentors of 1968, Debord and Althusser, form mirror images of each other, complementary halves of the ruptured unity of Western Marxism. Thus Debord saw a decline in Marx's theory after the *Communist Manifesto* and the defeats of 1848, while Althusser, conversely, rejected everything before 1845. (They could both agree to accept the *Manifesto*, but otherwise near-total breakdown!) For Debord, everything after 1848 was sullied by an incipient economism and mechanism; for Althusser everything before 1845 was ruined by idealism and subjectivism. For Debord, the revolution would be the result of the subjectivity of the proletariat, 'the class of consciousness'. 'Consciousness' had no place in Althusser's system, nor even subjectivity—he postulated a historical 'process without a subject'. When, after the defeat of 1968, both systems disintegrated, Leftists abandoned the grand boulevards of Totality, for myriad *dérives* in the winding lanes and labyrinthine back-streets. Too many got lost.

The publication in France of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1960) and Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (1962) provided the basis for two fundamentally opposed totalizing myths: that of a rationalist pseudo-objectivity and that of an imaginary pseudo-subjectivity respectively, to be combated on the terrain of Marxism by two antagonistic crusades, one precisely for a true revolutionary subjectivity (Debord) and the other for a true revolutionary objectivity (Althusser), each vitiated by the idealism

⁶⁹ Though the SI itself dissolved soon after 1968, the fall-out spread far. American groups flourished in Detroit, New York and Berkeley, where Ken Knabb's anthology, cited above, and Isaac Cronin and Terrel Seltzer's tape, 'Call It Sleep', helped popularize situationist ideas in the radical community. In England, situationist graphics were popularized within art colleges affected by the 1968 occupations and thence infiltrated the popular music scene. Jamie Reid's triumphantly subversive Sex Pistols polypsy ensures that the Punk debt to the situationists will not be forgotten. See also Greil Marcus, *op cit*.

and rationalism the other denounced.⁷⁰ One was, so to speak, abstractly romantic, the other abstractly classical. The unfulfilled dialectical project that remains (one which Jorn would have relished) is evidently that of rearticulating the two halves, each a one-sided development to an extreme of one aspect of the truth. Yet that one-sidedness is itself the necessary outcome of the pursuit of totality, with its concomitant critique of separation and refusal of specificity and autonomy. Ironically, Lukács's own analysis of the 'society of manipulation' in *Conversations with Lukács*, published in 1967, the same year as *The Society of the Spectacle*, takes up many of the same themes as Debord's book, without the philosophical maximalism of Debord's own Lukácsianism.⁷¹ We need to remember, too, André Breton's workbench and Breton's insistence that compatibility is sufficient grounds for solidarity, without the need to erase difference and totalize the protean forms of desire.

In 1978 Debord returned to the cinema to make *In German Imus Noctis et Consumimus Igni*, like his previous work a collage of found footage, but with a soundtrack that is simultaneously an autobiographical, a theoretical and a political reflection. He remembers Ivan Chichbeglov (the first formulator of 'unitary urbanism') and pays tribute to his dead comrades, Jorn and Pinot Gallizio. He recapitulates the story of Lacenaire in *Les Enfants du Paradis*, long the object of his identification, like Dr Omar and Prince Valiant.⁷² He does not regret that an avant-garde was sacrificed in the shock of a charge. 'Je trouve qu'elle était faite pour cela.'⁷³ Avant-gardes have their day and then, 'after them operations are undertaken in a much vaster theatre'. The Situationist International left a legacy of great value. The wasteful luxury of utopian projects, however doomed, is no bad thing. We need not persist in seeking a unique condition for revolution, but neither need we forget the desire for liberation. We move from place to place and from time to time. This is true of art as well as politics.

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Capital of the Spectacle

⁷⁰ See Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, London 1983, for a lucid account of the trajectory of Althusser and Althusserianism.

⁷¹ See Georg Lukács, with Hans Heinz Holz, Leo Kofler, Wolfgang Abendroth, *Conversations with Lukács*, London 1974. For comparison, see Debord's de-Lukácsized, *Commentaire sur la société du spectacle*, Paris 1988, which is closer to the late Lukács.

⁷² Dr Omar is the 'Doctor of Nothing', played with such languorous disdain by Victor Mature in Von Sternberg's *Shanghai Gesture*. Prince Valiant is the comic strip hero, evidence of a chivalresque bent on the part of Guy Debord, somewhat unexpected but consonant with his conception of a fraternal avant-gardism, militant and pure, devoted to the quest for the Grail of council communism.

⁷³ Guy Debord, 'Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes', Paris 1978. Debord's work in the cinema concludes with this film, whose last image bears the subtitle, 'A reprendre depuis le début'.

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Taking Monarchy Seriously

The institution of monarchy presents one of the most glaring paradoxes of British society and British history. It is a monarchy unique in the developed capitalist world in remaining unmodernized, undemocratized and utterly mystified. Elsewhere, in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, the institution survives as a kind of hereditary presidency, whose very ordinariness, unobtrusiveness and lack of glamour are held to be its special, symbolically egalitarian virtues. The contrast with Britain could hardly be greater. Here visibility, glamour, and the theatrical enactment of rituals which are thought, often quite wrongly, to be of immense antiquity,¹ and therefore symbolic of continuity and reverence for the past (Our Heritage), are central to the character and role of the modern British monarchy. Publicity is its lifeblood. No television news bulletin is complete without its royal item (Next: The Baby Elephant who met a Princess); no popular newspaper would dream of letting an entire week pass without devoting a 'spread' to speculation about the home life or sex life of one or another couple within the royal 'family'. Books about 'royalty', or using 'royalty' as their peg, pour from the presses, and if many of them end up remaindered in dusty heaps, there is nevertheless a huge market for such sanctified trivia.

Yet this relentlessly floodlit institution, now the focus of obsessive public attention and gossip, which arouses the fiercest and most passionate loyalty on a vast scale, becomes almost invisible when we turn to social and political analysis. Excavating for his brilliant new study of the British, or Anglo-British monarchy,² Tom Nairn has plainly had difficulty in unearthing anything of real substance in either sociology or the standard treatments of British government and politics. A few sociological articles around the time of the coronation, more than thirty years ago, and routine descriptions of the residual formal powers of the monarch (appointing the prime minister, creating peers, etc.) in the staple textbooks of British politics—that was about all he could find, and, so far as I know,

¹ Tom Nairn cites Lloyd George's invention of an Investiture ceremony for Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1911, and its re-invention in 1969, at a time when Welsh nationalism was reviving. For a general survey of such invented traditions in the nineteenth century, see *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by E.J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.

² Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy*, Radius, London 1988. Nairn is typically acute on the problems and significance of finding the appropriate name for the state under discussion, and chooses the term 'Ukania'. See pp. 93–4

all that there *is* to find. There are exceptions, of course—some of the work of R.W. Johnson, for example—but in general academic and intellectual neglect of this most conspicuous institution in British, and especially English, public life is itself a phenomenon that requires explanation.

Why, above all, do radicals ignore it? It is a measure of the rare value of Nairn's *Glass* that it is impossible to think of a comparably ambitious and penetrating study of its subject—one written, that is, from outside the parameters of the more or less breathless reverence for British political traditions and institutions which renders most commentary, including academic commentary, which is not merely sycophantic, virtually useless as serious analysis. In fact, even modest studies in a sober vein have been uncommon. If we leave aside Willie Hamilton's *My Queen and I*, which was at least more substantial than its tiresome title, the last cool look at the monarchy was taken by Kingsley Martin more than a quarter of a century ago.³ To say that Nairn's book fills this yawning gap would be an exaggeration, simply because, as I think Nairn would be the first to agree, the gap is so vast, and what is required is not a single study, but a whole range of investigations and debates, not to mention polemics, which will explore the roots and expose the workings of the social and political structures and culture to which the monarchy is so integral. It is in fact one of the merits of Nairn's book that it is so consistently suggestive, so creative in indicating areas and directions where further exploration is needed. I shall mention some of these later.

The Nairn-Anderson Theses

The Enchanted Glass is timely for several reasons, not the least of which is the impetus it will bring to the revived debate about the interpretation of modern British history and the modern British state. For it is clear that Nairn's new book is closely linked to his previous studies of nationalism and the British state (especially *The Break-up of Britain*), and also to those arguments which Nairn himself describes as having won 'an arcane and spurious dignity under the title of the "Nairn-Anderson theses"' (p. 379), originally put forward in *New Left Review* more than twenty years ago. Perry Anderson has recently reconsidered those arguments in these pages,⁴ and once again they have attracted critical comment from other socialists—this time from Michael Barratt Brown and Alex Callinicos.⁵

Barratt Brown's view, indicated by his title, seems to be that to attempt *any* comprehensive interpretation of modern British history is inherently objectionable, especially because of the somewhat cavalier disregard for detail that can admittedly result from trying to take a synoptic view. This is the voice of traditional British empiricism, a tone commoner among historians than economists. But in the end Barratt Brown does recognize that the very general questions posed by Anderson and Nairn do require answers, even if not those they themselves provide. 'If the current

³ Kingsley Martin, *The Crown and the Establishment*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1963.

⁴ Perry Anderson, 'The Figures of Descent', *New Left Review* 161, January-February 1987.

⁵ Michael Barratt Brown, 'Away with All the Great Arches', *NLR* 167, January-February 1988, and Alex Callinicos, 'Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System', *NLR* 169, May-June 1988.

peculiarity of the British state does not lie in its origins in a landed aristocracy and City plutocracy and their combined interest in international commerce, where does it lie?' he asks at a key point in his article.⁶ What alternative answer he then offers is far from clear, except that he seems inclined to pinpoint 'the gap that opened in British society... between... the practice of practical men in industry, technology and in banking and commerce, and... the philosophy of the academics in education, science and government', as well as 'the growing gap between government and industry'.⁷ These observations hardly seem adequate as an alternative explanation; but in any case they do not stand at a great distance from the Anderson-Nairn approach, and might even be subsumed within it.

Both Barratt Brown and Callinicos valuably draw attention to the international capitalist context of Britain's state and economy, and to what Britain has in common with other developed capitalist societies. But Callinicos goes further than this to suggest that there is little that significantly differentiates the British state from other capitalist states: 'Democracy is circumscribed in Britain because the state is capitalist, not because of its peculiar "patrician" nature'.⁸ And he argues that to concentrate on changes to political institutions and the political system would 'only reinforce the deep-seated parliamentary cretinism of the British Left'.⁹

There is undoubtedly at present a strong tendency in some quarters of the Left to turn away—with relief—from the always difficult issues of class and class power, and ownership and economic power, towards issues which can be seen and presented in terms of 'liberal' ideas like freedom and democracy.¹⁰ Given the familiarity and acceptability of such ideas, it is always tempting to try and fight the political battle on such well-trodden terrain, rather than choose the more arduous course of trying to introduce new ideas into political discourse, or of employing the controversial and 'extreme' language of class struggle. There may be those, too, who think of political changes as a substitute for social and economic changes, or who subscribe to an updated form of the old Chartist belief that political reform will more or less inevitably lead on to social and economic reform or even transformation. They might even, somewhat cynically, cite Marx in their support, since he at one time shared the Chartist view that in Britain at least the 'inevitable result' of universal suffrage would be 'the political supremacy of the working class'.¹¹

Callinicos is, of course, right to say that in every capitalist society devices

⁶ Barratt Brown, p. 40.

⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸ Callinicos, p. 101.

⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰ For example, on the Right of the Labour Party, Roy Hattersley's *Choose Freedom* (Penguin, 1987) proposes 'the extension of liberty' as 'the main aim of socialism' (p. xvii); and elsewhere on the spectrum of the Left, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe among others propose to redefine socialism in terms of 'radical democracy'. See the debate between these authors and Norman Geras in these pages (NLA 163, 166 and 169) and also Ellen Meiksins Wood's survey *The Retreat from Class* (Verso, 1986).

¹¹ 'The Chartist' (1852) in Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, ed. David Fernbach, Penguin/NLA, Harmondsworth 1973, p. 264.

exist to contain and restrict popular participation and what remnants there are of popular power. Britain is certainly not unique in that respect —although I don't know that anyone has ever claimed that it is. Capitalist democracy is a very restricted, and often unstable (*vide* Chile) version of democracy. As our current experience in Britain is proving, it is quite possible to retain the principle of regular popular elections and at the same time develop an increasingly centralized and authoritarian state. 'Elective dictatorship' is compatible with formal democracy as currently defined.

But there are degrees of democracy, degrees of freedom, degrees of equality within capitalist societies, and the differences are not trivial or unimportant. That Britain is less democratic in its ideology, its conventions and its central political institutions than some other capitalist states surely matters. That we remain subjects rather than citizens, and that sovereignty here has never been successfully claimed by the people but remains vested in 'the queen-in-parliament', can easily be seen as trivial matters, not worth the agitational attention of serious socialists. But this argument about triviality can be turned on its head. If these changes are so trivial, why have they not been accomplished? Why would such supposedly slight alterations in fact be so fiercely resisted?

It has been the stock response of the Labour Party throughout its history to dismiss as 'trivial' or 'irrelevant' any proposal for change in the institutions of the state, or in ruling-class adjuncts of the state such as the so-called public schools, Oxbridge, the legal profession or the honours system. It is hard to accept that this response is even honest; at best it can only be the product of massive self-deception—which, it must be admitted, is one of the endemic features of social democracy, clinging as it must to the illusion that socialism can be achieved without pain or conflict. In fact it is hard to think of many things that it would be *more* difficult for a radical government to accomplish than the abolition of privileged private education. One of those few things, however, would certainly be the abolition of the monarchy.

This very fact of difficulty makes nonsense of the triviality argument, and of the conventional Left attitude which contrives to disregard the monarchy as a sideshow, an irrelevance, or, in Nairn's words, as 'decorative icing on the socio-political cake' (p. 348). There could hardly be any serious political obstacle to removing icing from a cake, or demolishing the odd sideshow, if that was what these supposed 'trappings' really were. We therefore have to ask, not only why it has not been attempted by one or other of the few radical governments Britain has had in the past century and a half, but also why any such attempt would almost certainly have failed. Why do these pre-democratic sideshows, trappings, decorations not only survive but flourish? Just as there is nothing comparable to the British monarchy in the developed world, so too there is no self-proclaimed democracy which retains a second legislative chamber dominated by hereditary aristocrats and entirely unelected. Whether they are judged trivial or substantial, these 'survivals' require explanation.

This is the special strength of what may, for the sake of brevity, be called the Anderson-Nairn interpretation of the history and specific character

of the British state. Because this interpretation has gained considerable acceptance, especially but not exclusively on the Left, it now seems to be fashionable to pooh-pooh it for being 'commonplace' or banal.² Strictly speaking, that is neither here nor there. The demand for originality is often no more than the jaded academic's version of the craving for novelty. The question is whether the interpretation is true; or, if that is too absolute a criterion, whether it carries a weight of explanatory power. By this test the Anderson-Nairn interpretation has worn well. It continues to offer a coherent, illuminating explanation of much of what is peculiar to Britain's crisis and its pattern of sustained decline as a manufacturing and industrial economy, which has been accelerated rather than reversed by the experience of Thatcherism. It also has the merit of explaining the uniquely archaic and pre-democratic features of the contemporary British state.

Tom Nairn's study of the monarchy is a rich work with many dimensions. It could be treated as an exceptionally ambitious attempt to examine one monarchy, to explain its nature and its role(s); and, given that fairly specific focus, it would have to be judged as outstanding in its scope and its insights. But, more importantly, it constitutes an extension and re-statement of that interpretation of British history and the evolution of the British state which has been at the heart of all his work, and which is once more the subject of debate. Hence its timeliness.

A Nationalist Pivot

Nairn's central argument is that the British monarchy is the hinge or pivot upon which British, or Anglo-British nationalism depends. But my—and his—hesitation as to what is the precise character of this particular nationalism indicates the problem. With Welsh or Scottish or even Irish nationalism there is no comparable difficulty. In each case the territorial basis of the nation in question is clear even if, as in the Irish case, it is disputed. England, too, is a well-defined territory. Despite centuries of interpenetration, it comes naturally to nearly everyone in these islands to describe themselves, to each other if not when 'abroad', as English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish. The only group who very self-consciously call themselves British are the Protestant Unionists of Northern Ireland, and this is essentially a way of denying that they are Irish, rather than anything more positive. But British nationalism is 'a special variety of Royal or non-ethnic nationalism' (p. 269).

The cumbersome official title of the Ukanian state also illustrates the problem. As a rough rule, it is safe to assume that any state using the term 'united' in its title, is not. Really united nation-states do not need to use the term. But in addition it is clear that Ukania is a multi-national state, and Britain, though older than many modern multi-national states, has had to grapple with the same problem: that of creating a national, or pseudo-national identity and allegiance which can, at all moments of

² David Cannadine, *New Statesman and Society*, 10 June 1988, claimed that Nairn's explanation for the survival of the monarchy was 'based on the two most commonplace ideas about Britain's past which are in circulation at present'.

political crisis and emergency, override the subordinate national loyalties which might possibly conflict with it.

The degree of force which was employed in the expansion and attempted unification of Britain is often forgotten, especially by the English. Edward I's conquest of Wales was so long ago that it is easily overlooked, even though the visible symbols of English power, the looming castles of Conwy, Caernarvon, Harlech, Beaumaris and the rest, still stand as witnesses to the level of coercion that was needed. The union with Scotland, though devoutly wished for by much of the Scottish Lowland elite, was not consummated without the special savagery by which the independent Highland clans were first subdued, from Glencoe to Culloden, and then forced out of their homelands by the clearances of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The history of the British domination of Ireland is, of course, even more bloody, repressive and unscrupulous than anything that happened on the mainland, and it is not yet ended.

Conquest and coercion by themselves would not be enough to create a supranational unity, even though they played a role in destroying the separate identities of the conquered peoples—as in the outlawing of the Gaelic language in Ireland, so movingly recalled in Brian Friel's wonderful play, *Translations*. 'A personalized and totemic symbolism was needed to maintain the a-national nationalism of a multinational (and for long imperial) entity' (p. II). What is needed, in fact, is the invention of traditions. Given the extraordinary ease with which pseudo-historical novelties can be passed off as time-hallowed, age-encrusted customs, this may not be as difficult as it sounds. Nevertheless, the task is made immensely easier when you have to hand institutions, such as the monarchy and parliament, which ~~are~~ actually old, and which only need judicious touching up and energetic marketing in order to become the revered, untouchable symbols of a new, fundamentally fake but politically indispensable, version of the national identity.

The creation of the new Anglo-British national identity was above all the work of the late nineteenth century. Its two central institutions were monarchy and empire, and the two were most skilfully knotted together. The acquisition of a vast non-European empire distracted attention from the earlier colonization of the British Isles themselves, as well as other class-based sources of internal division, and provided a saga of demonstrable 'greatness' in which all the British nations could, and were vigorously encouraged to, take pride. And over it all presided the monarch, not only Queen but Empress as well, in Disraeli's inspired invention. Nairn pays particular attention to the way in which Gladstone exploited a convenient royal illness (and recovery) to scotch a resurgence of republicanism in the early 1870s; but it can hardly be coincidence that the ensuing creation of the 'modern' myth-laden monarchy took place in the heyday of British imperial expansion. This refurbished monarchy is both imperial and British (rather than English), and it is empire which provides the context within which 'Britishness' can be nourished and developed. The imperial dimension of the modern monarchy is, I think, rather too much neglected by Nairn.

This carefully cultivated British nationalism is not only intended to

swamp the more deeply rooted nationalisms of Ukania's component nations. It also serves to disguise English dominance within the multi-national state, and more specifically, the dominance of the metropolis, the City of London and the south-eastern ruling class over all the British isles. 'Monarchy is . . . the popular visage and social cement of Great Britain's unique version of capitalist development: the prolonged and baroquely gilded hegemony of "early" or commercial capitalism over all subsequent phases' (p. 241). Nothing more effectively expresses, yet conceals, that narrow elite dominance than the monarchy—a symbol with which we can all identify. And, it has to be said, no institution works harder to reassure or persuade non-metropolitan Britain that, despite its ludicrously obvious upper-class character, it is nevertheless an institution which 'belongs' to us all.

It is often rightly observed that there is a good deal that is synthetic about many forms of nationalism. But the creators of nationalism are usually the nationalists themselves. The case of British nationalism is exceptional in that it is not the product of any kind of nationalist or national liberation struggle. It is essentially a nationalism devised and inspired from above, but with the inestimable advantage that it could be constructed around existing institutions and traditions, and in the context of an unrivalled territorial empire. Tom Nairn is surely right to argue that the monarchy lies at the heart of this constructed British nationalism, and plays a key role in disarming radical ideologies within the Ukanian State-nation, as he perceptively calls it.

The Thatcherite Counter-Revolution

The decade of Thatcherism ought, one would hope, to have cured the Left, and especially the Marxist Left, of any tendency to underestimate the importance of the specific character of political structures and institutions as the vehicles through which class interests are legitimized and enforced. For it has been through the central structures of the state that the counter-revolution against social democracy and Labourism has been carried through. 'Having facilitated a counter-revolution (far more easily than it ever tolerated Labour's brief "social revolution" of the 1940s) the Constitution has voided the old political mould to expose a true elective tyranny' (p. 381). The idea of 'elective dictatorship' which Lord Hailsham introduced into British politics in the late 1970s as a stick with which to beat the Labour government (accompanied by all the usual windbagery about the dangers of 'Marxist totalitarianism'), can now be seen to have real value; not simply because no government in Britain ever rests on the support of a majority of those who vote, but at best represents the will of the largest minority, but also because there are no substantial constitutional checks or political limits on what a really determined government can do to the social, political and economic fabric. There is no written constitution, no bill of rights, no provision for referenda, no security of any kind for institutions outside central government. This has been made most dramatically clear in the fate of local government under Thatcher. Councils can be abolished, elected authorities replaced or by-passed, and local government as a whole stripped of innumerable powers and hemmed in by blatantly partisan restrictions in those it still retains—and against this there is no recourse 'within the law'. This, of course, explains

Margaret Thatcher's fondness for invoking 'the rule of law', for there is no law in Britain which cannot be changed by a government (like hers) with a solid majority in the House of Commons. This is what 'parliamentary democracy' means in Britain. It is the absolute power, not of parliament as such, but of the executive which, given its majority in the Commons, has nothing to fear from the supposedly sovereign legislature.

Sometimes this absolutism has been justified as being the expression of 'the popular will', and the Left, especially the Labour Party, has looked forward to the periods when in its 'turn' it could execute 'the popular will' in this untrammelled fashion. This illusion still flourishes in the Labour Party, which has hardly begun to grasp the significance for political reform of what has been happening in the 1980s.¹³ But to those less susceptible to the illusion that Labour can use the state in a similarly ruthless fashion, it is clear that authoritarianism legitimized by quinquennial elections is no longer acceptable as the ultimate expression of democracy in Britain.

Tom Nairn sees this, of course; and as a Scottish socialist living far outside the Thatcherite heartlands of southern England, he sees it with a particularly bitter clarity. But there is a certain ambivalence in his treatment of the Thatcher years, which suggests that he finds in Thatcherism a distorted version of that 'modernization' of British society which the logic of his historical argument implies is what is needed, or at least cannot be avoided. Tell-tale phrases like 'up to 1979' hint at this, and he accepts too readily the self-image of Thatcherism as 'radical' (see p. 385, for instance). He also interprets Thatcher's 'scarcely veiled hostility towards Elizabeth, II' as a kind of 'creeping, hypocritical, unconfessable and right-wing "Republicanism"' which 'may be a little better than none at all' (p. 256). Despite all those qualifying adjectives and inverted commas, I think this concedes too much. Thatcher's impatient ambivalence towards the monarch and monarchy is readily explained. The inherited pre-democratic structure of the British state has, in effect, transferred the near-absolute powers once enjoyed by the monarch to the prime minister. Yet this transfer is concealed and endorsed by the survival of the monarchy, and hence the retention of the myth of sovereignty as resting in 'the queen-in-parliament'. Thatcher, as the most aggressive wielder of prime ministerial power in twentieth-century peacetime Britain, naturally resents her formal subordination to a hereditary ruler (who is also a woman), and resents it all the more because she knows how necessary and convenient it is. The tension is exacerbated by her open espousal of class-war policies, while one function of the monarchy has long been to sustain the ideology of national unity, which has historically been of such importance in disguising and legitimating ruling-class domination. Hence the anxieties voiced especially by the heir to the throne, but also by the churches, for whom the one-nation ideology is almost a precondition of successfully operating at all.

Nairn recognizes that Thatcher's indifference to 'institutional or high-

¹³ An exception should be made of Tony Benn and the Labour Left associated with the Chesterfield Conferences of 1987 and 1988, where the issue of political reform has received considerable attention

political reform. . . . derives from the virtually perfect armoury placed in her hands by the Crown', so that 'her contempt for its archaism' (that of the British state) 'has been effaced by her enjoyment of its powers' (p. 358). But to my mind this point has been made more single-mindedly in the articles of his friend and fellow Scottish socialist Neal Ascherson,¹⁴ who has argued consistently that the myth of 'parliamentary democracy' has served to conceal and to legitimate 'a rapid increase of uncontrolled State power and a decay of already archaic political institutions'.¹⁵

It is the pervasive dominance of this mythology that makes Tom Nairn's treatment of the history of the British state so important. To challenge that mythology or ideology, it is necessary to re-assess and re-study that history, and much that is most valuable in *The Enchanted Glass*, as in his earlier work, contributes powerfully to such a re-assessment. But there are oddities, and there are gaps, and it is worth mentioning some of these, if only to suggest some of the points on which a programme of future republican and socialist research into British history might be focused. Some of these gaps may be explained by the rather unsystematic, or at least puzzling ordering of the materials of the book. Others it would simply be unreasonable to expect a single writer, focusing on monarchy, to be able to fill. But they will need to be filled, if this still in some ways rather sketchy version of British history is to gain more substance and a wider credibility.

The 'Glorious Compromise'

Nairn (and Ascherson) rightly focus on the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 as a key episode in the evolution of the modern, or semi-modern British political system; and both insist, again rightly—and topically in this tercentenary year—that the true meaning of that event has not been grasped. Nairn shows how this was one of those moments in English history when republicanism was decisively rejected, and he does this mainly by examining the sad fate of Edmund Ludlow, one of the surviving Republicans who had signed Charles I's death warrant in 1649. Ludlow, who had been in exile for nearly twenty years since the Restoration, returned briefly to London, perhaps thinking that the republican hour had come round again. But the very presence of a 'regicide' was an embarrassment. The Commons begged the newly installed William III to banish Ludlow again, and the king was of course happy to oblige. This is certainly a revealing vignette; but it is even more important to consider the events which led up to William's successful invasion. The crassness of James II's efforts to intrude Catholics into the machinery of the state had revived the dormant tradition of republicanism (which had in any case been part of the hidden agenda of the protracted attempt to exclude James from the succession to the throne in 1679–81)—so much so that William himself had the impression that supporters of a 'commonwealth' or republic were the strongest single political grouping.¹⁶ The aristocratic invitation to William to come over, his positive response, and the ease with which James was displaced, can only be explained by the way in which the propertied classes were haunted by the nightmare of what had

¹⁴ Neal Ascherson, *Games with Shadows*, London 1988

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ix

¹⁶ See Maurice Ashley, *The Glorious Revolution of 1688*, London 1966, p. 179

happened only thirty years before. Fear of popular revolution and republicanism are the key to what Nairn calls the 'Glorious and Bloodless Compromise of 1688' (p. 147). The so-called Revolution was made to prevent a real one. It was the genius of the Whig propagandists to appropriate the name of 'revolution' for this essentially conservative counter-coup, and so help to obliterate the memory of the genuinely revolutionary upheavals of the 1640s. It did represent a final check to the absolutist ambitions of the Stuarts, but there was no substantial, let alone 'democratic' dispersion of power after 1689. Power was concentrated in the hands of the propertied ruling elite. This fact was, however, partially concealed by an extraordinary smokescreen of apparently radical and even democratic ideology.

The most influential figure in the formation of that ideology was John Locke, and I think it is a cardinal mistake of Nairn's to devote space to Hobbes, the radical philosopher of absolutism, whose ideas had little or no impact on the evolution of British politics, but to neglect Locke. Locke may well have been more radical in his own politics than has often been suggested,¹⁷ and it is certainly true that his doctrine of a right of rebellion or revolution, though temporarily convenient to the Whigs in the 1680s, became a radical embarrassment thereafter, when the concern of the regime was to stabilize and legitimize the new order. But it is equally significant to see how, starting often from radical premises, he managed to arrive at essentially complacent and unchallenging conclusions, diluting the idea of consent by introducing the device of tacit consent, for example.

Given the significance of the 1680s and especially 1688 in putting an end to the radical challenge to monarchy and the property-owners' state, I am sure that Nairn is right to see the period after 1688 as 'the founding period' in which 'a pre-democratic class State' emerged, which was distinct both from the contemporary Absolute monarchies and from the nationalist democracies which began to emerge after 1776 and 1789 (p. 154). The 'Parliamentary Sovereignty' then established has 'nothing to do with Republican democracy and popular power in the normal contemporary sense', he argues, but represents instead 'a transmuted version of Monarchy... built up as a barrier against democracy and people's sovereignty' (p. 155). He could usefully have enlarged upon these ideas, for there is plenty of evidence to support them. The period after 1688, the era of Whig dominance, is a period when large numbers of electors in the English and Welsh boroughs were actually disenfranchised, and the electorate as a whole probably shrunk rather than expanded. Parliament extended its own life from three to seven years, and Walpole even favoured parliaments with no fixed term, so that elections could be dispensed with altogether if need be. Not that he need have worried. James II would have envied Walpole his skills in buying and manipulating votes and packing parliaments.¹⁸

Other oligarchies may well have envied the English rulers' skill in exploiting democratic and republican terminology for their own purposes, too

¹⁷ This, I understand, is the argument of the recent work of Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke's 'Two Treatises of Government'*, Princeton University Press, 1987

¹⁸ See J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725*, London 1967

We have naturally come to see the term 'the people' as lying at the core of democratic thinking. But in eighteenth-century England the ruling class managed to use the term to mean only that minority which was already enfranchised and lavishly propertied. 'The people', by one of those conjuring tricks of ideology, excluded the majority of actual people, even of male people (the only ones who then counted as potential citizens). 'When we talk of people with regard to elections,' said Henry Fox, father of Charles James, 'we ought to think only of those of the better sort, without comprehending the mob or mere dregs of the people.'¹⁹ The more closely Whig dominance and ideology is examined, the more deeply undemocratic and indeed anti-democratic it turns out to be. But all this was concealed by the existence and dominance of a parliament and a supposed constitution which for nearly a century *did* offer something more liberal and, significantly, more commercially successful than the Absolutist states of the continent.²⁰

As Nairn says, up to 1745 and the final defeat of Stuart hopes of a restoration, this state had to be defended against the past. After that it had to be defended against the future—the future of nationalism, popular sovereignty and the rights of man—and woman (see p. 167). The one person who most clearly represented that future in the English-speaking world was, of course, Thomas Paine, the most influential and the most famous of all British republicans. His role in shaping working-class consciousness in England was unique, and has been classically documented by E.P. Thompson.²¹ But the question of what happened to Paine's legacy, in both America and Britain—how it evaporated, how it was diluted and distorted to the point where even President Reagan could quote Paine with approval—would be another way of exploring the defeat and decline of political radicalism in the modern age. Nairn rightly pays attention, though not enough attention, to Burke as a leading formulator of the conventional Whig-conservative wisdom about the so-called British constitution, but his relative neglect of Paine is less than generous. Paine's attacks on monarchy, and on the British monarchy in particular, remain the best and most outspoken in the language, and his challenge to Burke over the 'constitution' is classic and irrefutable. 'Can then Mr Burke produce the English Constitution? If he cannot, we may fairly conclude, that though it has been so much talked about, no such thing as a constitution exists, or ever did exist, and consequently that the people have yet a constitution to form.'²²

Nineteenth-Century Consolidation

It would be valuable, too, to know more about the development of an Anglo-British counter-revolutionary nationalism during the Napoleonic years. Was the image of Nelson as a popular patriotic hero consciously fostered by the state, for example? Would a study of nineteenth-century

¹⁹ Quoted in H.T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*, London 1977, p. 128. And see also the statement by Sir James Tyrrell, quoted on pp. 78 and 88.

²⁰ For a condensed summary, see my *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism*, Oxford 1984, ch. 8.

²¹ In chapters 4 and 5 of *The Making of the English Working Class*.

²² Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (Penguin 1969), pp. 93–4.

literature tell us more about this? Certainly the popular image of the French monster 'Boney' survives in the work of Thomas Hardy (*The Trumpet-Major* and *The Dynasts*), who heard it in his Dorset childhood in the 1840s; and it is even rather self-consciously evoked as late as 1913 in Vaughan Williams's 'folk' opera, *Hugh the Drover*. A full history of British political radicalism and its thwarted efforts to subvert the pre-modern state would also have to take account of the avowedly middle-class radicalism of the Anti-Corn Law League, and its leaders Cobden and Bright. Bright in particular saw himself as a crusader against every vestige of 'feudalism', and both believed that the victory of the League in 1846 was sure to be followed by other triumphs over the landowners and the *ancien régime*. To discover why their expectations were disappointed would provide another piece in the jigsaw.

Tom Nairn provides a brilliant thumbnail sketch of the way in which the upsurge of republican sentiment in 1870–71 was countered by Gladstone's unhesitating exploitation of the Prince of Wales's recovery from serious illness as an occasion for 'national thanksgiving', with 27 February 1872 being declared a public holiday, a special service being staged at St Pauls, and so on and so on. Thereafter the process of creating the 'modern', highly visible and ceremonialized monarchy went strongly forward. I am struck by the number of ways in which the last thirty years of the nineteenth century seem to mark the demise of so much of the more dispersed and diversified political culture of the earlier period of industrialization, and its replacement by the so-called 'national' but actually southern and metropolitan political dominance about which Nairn is so eloquently scathing. Nairn follows those historians who have noted that the major political movements of the first half of the century, such as Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League, were not based in or focused on London. They were expressions of a 'provincial' vitality which was more genuinely national than the metropolitan-centred political culture which displaced it. This was also a period of the rise of the modern 'national' (i.e. London) newspapers which put so many of the smaller and often more radical 'provincial' newspapers out of business, and which have played so loud and slavish a role in sustaining the cult of monarchy. And it was also the period in which independent working-class schools were replaced by a system of state-administered schools for the working class—a very different thing.²³ This, in other words, may be another key period in the establishment of the southern upper-class hegemony with which the monarchy is now so intimately identified, and it would repay study from that angle.

Nairn has not written a history of the evolution of the monarchy, or of what he terms the Ukanian state, and it was not his intention to do so. Nevertheless, his determining perspective on the British state is historical through and through. It is only in terms of history that their present character can be understood. It follows, therefore, that the historical gaps in his interpretation really do need to be filled, and my purpose in indicating some of them is not so much to criticize Nairn as to suggest ways in which his enterprise can and should be followed up.

²³ See J F C. Harrison, *The Common People*, London 1984, pp. 291–2.

Capitalism and Modernity

Tom Nairn has never been afraid to follow up the logic of his ideas, however heterodox the outcome may seem. In a section aptly entitled 'Sooner Than One Thinks', he reflects provocatively on the possible wider implications of the persistence of such institutions as the British monarchy. The processes of capitalist-industrial-French-revolutionary modernization, which radicals like Paine, as well as the founding fathers of Marxism, expected would 'put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations' and leave remaining 'no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment"',²⁴ have proved to be far more patchy and gradual than nineteenth-century optimism (or pessimism) anticipated. Might it not be the case, suggests Nairn, looking over the recent political history of Europe, that capitalism, far from being in its 'late' stage or its long-expected 'death-throes', is only now in the first decades of its 'true ascendancy' (p. 375)? Nairn adduces good reasons for thinking in this way; and, *a priori*, it seems plausible enough. He cites Arno Mayer's *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, and other recent writers have also noted the continuing vitality of so many of those ideas and institutions which 'ought' by now to have been swept away by the supposedly irresistible tides of 'progress'.²⁵

And yet there are certain considerations to be weighed against this. Marx and the other apostles of modernity, liberal as well as socialist, were surely right to see that one aspect of modernity, especially since 1789, has been the speeding up of history. In some ways, and in some parts of the world, it has probably moved even faster than anyone would have expected a century ago. Who would have predicted that the great European empires, built up to their zenith in the last half of the nineteenth century, would crumble away so quickly in the twentieth? The sluggish advance of modernity in the West should be set against its devastating impact upon the non-European world.

There is a (rather surprising) touch of the old-style mechanical Marxism in Nairn's argument at this point, I think. It is as if he is suggesting that we still have to live through the prescribed phase of capitalism before we can begin to think about socialism. Better to tighten our belts, gird our loins, and prepare for a few centuries of uphill struggle against capitalism. No doubt I parody the point. But virtually the entire history of twentieth-century revolutions consists in deviations from this pattern. Struggles against capitalism have been waged in tandem with struggles against feudalism. It has not been possible to conduct them in the approved, neat historical order. What is more, by a further dialectical twist, we know that some of the opposition to capitalism, and some of the most cogent critiques of capitalist society, have come from reactionary quarters, from those like Coleridge, Carlyle and Ruskin, who remained half in love with a sentimental vision of a stable and prosperous feudal past. It was cruel of David Cannadine, in the review already referred to, to suggest that Tom Nairn was putting forward 'an essentially Thatcherite

²⁴ In *The Communist Manifesto*, section 1, 'Bourgeois and Proletarians'.

²⁵ See, for example, Andrew Gamble, *An Introduction to Modern Social Political Thought*, London 1981, esp. chapter 5.

critique'. But, as I have noted, there is a certain ambiguity on this point. It does sometimes sound as if he thinks that the Thatcher medicine is a necessary if (like most medicines) obnoxious part of the cure for the British disease. I would say that, on the contrary, we need republican and democratic change, not to facilitate capitalist modernization, but to build a more powerful and effective popular and socialist resistance to it.

This need for democratic, if not republican, change in Britain is something which is evidently felt by a significant and growing minority, to judge by the extraordinary and, I think, unexpected success with which the document Charter 88 was launched in the last weeks of 1988. It was entirely logical that Tom Nairn should have been among its initial signatories. Charter 88's success in attracting wide support and attention—indeed, in pushing its way onto the agenda of mainstream politics—owes much, if not all, to its limited and cautious character. Its 'call for a new constitutional settlement' does not overstep the bounds of political liberalism. It is the political system and political institutions which are to be reformed and democratized. The democratization of institutions outside the state itself, the issue of democracy at the workplace (which is now being addressed in the Soviet Union), are not addressed by Charter 88. And human rights more broadly and radically conceived are all by-passed in a single subsidiary clause: 'the extension of social rights in a modern economy is a matter of debate everywhere.' Nevertheless, it is the political and social illiberalism and authoritarianism of the Thatcher governments which primarily prompted the drafting of Charter 88; coupled with the recognition that it was the pre-modern, non-constitutional character of the British state, with its assignment of absolute power to parliament in theory, and to the executive in practice, which made this authoritarianism and abuse of power possible.

Britain turns out to be a far less deeply and securely liberal polity than has been popularly supposed. That has always been one of the conclusions to be drawn from Nairn's and Anderson's account of the evolution of the British state and political system. For a long time it was possible to dismiss this as a matter of no, or little, importance. But the experience of the past decade has revealed just how fragile were the foundations of that complacency. Executive absolutism has been used to attack not only 'socialism', or at any rate Labourism, but also to erode and destroy traditional, conventional liberal rights and freedoms. Seen in this context, and within the longer perspective of Anglo-British history so sharply etched by Tom Nairn, the liberal demands of Charter 88 appear not only apposite but urgently justified. Modest and limited as they must appear from some angles, taken together as a programme of political change they undoubtedly amount to a radical upheaval within the stiff-jointed context of British politics.

Meditations on a Theme by Tom Nairn

In China an immemorial throne crumbled in 1911; India put its Rajas and Nawabs in the wastepaper-basket as soon as it gained independence in 1947; in Ethiopia the Lion of Judah has lately ceased to roar. Monarchy survives in odd corners of Asia; and in Japan and Britain. In Asia saint-hood has often been hereditary, and can yield a comfortable income to remote descendants of holy men; in Europe hereditary monarchy had something of the same numinous character. In both cases a dim sense of an invisible flow of vital forces from generation to generation, linking together the endless series, has been at work. Very primitive feeling may lurk under civilized waistcoats. Notions derived from age-old magic helped Europe's 'absolute monarchs' to convince taxpayers that a country's entire welfare, even survival, was bound up with its God-sent ruler's. Mughal emperors appeared daily on their balcony so that their subjects could see them and feel satisfied that all was well. Rajput princes would ride in a daily cavalcade through their small capitals, for the same reason. Any practical relevance of the crown to public well-being has long since vanished, but somehow in Britain the existence of a Royal Family seems to convince people in some subliminal way that everything is going to turn out all right for them. In H.G. Wells's novel about the setting up of a fascist dictatorship, the public is acquiescent, but a silent crowd gathers in front of Buckingham Palace, seeking reassurance.¹

Things of today may have ancient roots; on the other hand antiques are often forgeries, and Royal sentiment in Britain today is largely an artificial product. Or, at least, the timeworn heirloom has more than once had to be carefully restored and polished up. England was the first country to put its king on trial and execute him (after executing a deposed Scottish monarch as a trial run). France did not follow suit until 1793, when Louis XVI's death fluttered all the dovescotes of Europe. In England anxious care had to be expended on a polishing up of George III. A praiseworthy interest in turnips had earned him the title of 'Farmer George', but what he had accomplished was chiefly the loss of the American colonies. In October 1795 a Norfolk parson visiting London and taking a walk in St James's Park watched the king pass in his state-coach, 'with eight Cream-

¹ H.G. Wells, *The Autocracy of Mr Parham* (1930).

Coloured Horses in red Morocco-leather Harness', and was greatly shocked to see His Majesty 'very grossly insulted by some of the Mob'. A bullet flew through the coach window, and on its return journey its occupant was 'very much hissed and hooted at', and was close to being rough-handled by a set of 'the most violent and lowest Democrats'. Next night he was well received at Covent Garden by a more respectable gathering, and 'God Save the King' was played six times, as though to make sure that Heaven was listening. 'Thank God!' exclaimed the parson's diary.² In 1799 money expended on George's birthday celebration by the small weavers' town of Girvan on the Ayrshire coast rose from the customary few shillings to £2.13.10, including a 'mysterious item' for drink.³ A great deal of loyal enthusiasm must always have been called forth by judicious donations for the drinking of toasts. For the throne and its Tory custodians George's madness was a stroke of luck; it gave him the best of alibis, and ensured facile sympathy. Two years after his death in 1822 the not very politically-minded Charles Lamb, indignant at a legal verdict against Leigh Hunt for publishing Byron's 'Vision of Judgment', derided 'the good old talk about our good old King—his personal virtues saving us from a revolution, etc. etc.', and wound up: 'What a wretched thing a Lord Chief Justice is, always was, and will be!'⁴

The Fountain of Loyalty

After George's blackguard offspring, Providence came to the rescue by setting an innocent maiden on the throne; the fountain of loyalty could gush freely once more. There was less satisfaction later on with Victoria as a dumpy do-nothing widow, and even a brief flutter of republicanism. In 1870 France abandoned monarchy for the last time. But the massacre in Paris next year, by its republican heirs and their troops, of thirty thousand Commune prisoners, could not recommend republicanism, at least to British workers. That huge bubble of collective illusion, the empire, swelling dizzily at the end of the century, helped to float the throne into a blue sky. Two great wars since then, putting a premium on any national figurehead, have been a further bonus. Dull presidents and beastly dictators abroad have provided a useful foil. George VI died at the right moment to bring another easily romanticized young woman into the limelight.

This advantage has been sedulously exploited by vested interests like the cheap press, for which royalty is a never-failing source of profit, and politicians who want the common herd to stick to such harmless reading. Historians may have grown too disdainful of anything that can be called a 'conspiracy theory'. Most of history has been a conspiracy of rich against poor, under one concealment or another. After the Second World War all politicians were in dread of a demand for real change, and a conjuror's wand to cast glamour over the crown and bemuse the crowd was a panacea not to be neglected. One of many sins of the feebly progressive Labour Party was its falling in so readily with this stratagem, and especially with the elaborate hocus-pocus of the Coronation. Royal ceremonial

² *The Diary of a Country Parson 1758-1802*, by James Woodforde, ed. J. Beresford, Oxford 1978, pp. 306-9.

³ *Girvan 1668-1968* (municipal centenary publication), p. 55.

⁴ Charles Lamb, letter to Bernard Barton, 23 January 1824.

and spectacle have flourished in the congenial soil of our age of self-advertising. They had an early start in England, where rulers from the sixteenth century had less real power than abroad and more need to cultivate public favour. Philip II of Spain could shut himself up in his Escorial, Elizabeth I had to be on view to her people. There is a foretaste of our latest coronation in the rapturous description of that of Elizabeth I's mother Anne Boleyn, and her romantic charm and 'saintlike' bearing, in a play partly by Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*. Later on, empire contributed skills learned from the staging of *tamashas* to please and impress Calcutta or Hongkong, and brought droves of tributary princes to be paraded through London.

Tom Nairn has written a searching full-length study of the effects of this potent intoxicant on British life and habits; it well deserves the Scottish book-prize it has shared. Most of those with political leanings similar to his have preferred to pass by the subject, as too ineffably silly—like women's fashion-magazines—for serious discussion, Nairn has proved that it can and must be confronted in all seriousness. Rather puzzlingly, it is true, he begins by saying that Britons know the flattering image they see in their royal mirror to be 'only a decreasingly useful lie' (p. 9); if this were so, the task of getting them to throw it away would surely be much easier. They have puffed up their self-esteem by being faithful devotees of their talisman; and with little else in public life to stir emotion, even a tinsel covering for its drabness is better than none at all. Many who are, or like to think themselves and be thought, too intelligent to share the infection, will say when challenged that it is good for the country's 'stability', or shrug it off as an irrelevancy. Part of Nairn's case is that republican arrows suffer from having no tangible target to hit, as they did when monarchs really ruled.

Britain's monarchy is 'Europe's greatest living fossil' (p. 115); progressives are too apt to blink the fact that 'an archaic institution may express something deeply and incorrigibly archaic about the society' it belongs to (p. 123). There is a 'totemic' flavour in the 'obscure relationship' between Royal trivialities and a mysterious collective unconscious (pp. 31, 36). 'Royals' (who invented this repulsive neologism?) exude a mystique over and above the fascination of the 'media stars' they have to be nowadays (p. 27). This must be admitted, but it is important that they are members now of the Entertainment industry, in a time when actors and entertainers are among the world's most idolized and highly rewarded inhabitants. 'Royals' trail long shadows after them. Nairn points out how Coronation publicity made play with history: a thousand years were watching, it appeared, from behind the monuments of Westminster Abbey (p. 124). General Bonaparte at the battle of the Pyramids exhorted his men to think of the two thousand years of history looking down on them. History, or rather the 'historical amnesia' of the ordinary man, is too often on the wrong side: conservatism needs only evocative catchphrases, socialism needs real understanding.

Civic spirit has been choking in our urban anthecaps. Locally it may be reduced to attachment to the fortunes of a football team; nationally it is fanned into life quickest by an absurdity like the Falklands war. Royal appearances do something to fill, or hide, the blank. They may be a

routine laying of foundation-stones, cutting of ribbons, or breaking of champagne bottles, acts elsewhere performed more economically by presidents or ministers. As Nairn says, workmen who have had a hand in building something like the Thames Flood Barrier are gratified by their work being recognized in this way (p. 47). But for the monarchy to be extolled as the keystone of the nation—it used to be credited with holding the Commonwealth together—suggests that Britain must be in a parlous condition. A morbidly excessive harping on the word 'community' is one symptom of this; it is not without undertones of the Nazi *Volkgemeinschaft* (pp. 178, 317). There is, no doubt, an unacknowledged human preference for the irrational; it appeals to emotion, stronger and more agreeable than reason. Only laborious self-training can harmonize the two things, never perfectly. Collective consciousness revives on 'State occasions', when royal participants express, not so much by speech as by ritual, symbolic gesture or 'body-language', what the inarticulate multitude deeply but indistinctly feels. At such moments any foibles of the individuals concerned are forgotten; hieratic uniforms conceal all inadequacies. 'Institution and personality' are fused (p. 46).

Community and Crown

Nairn is right to point to a quasi-religious element in the marriage of 'community' and crown. A 'Royal' is an 'iconic personage' (p. 82); a good term—Britons have photographs on their walls of Royal Highnesses as Russians used to have faces of saints. The royal he or she is invested with an aura of something approaching sanctity, even if it falls well short of the whole-hog divinity claimed by a Mikado or Son of Heaven. This helps to account for the torrents of imbecile fury that (we learn) criticisms like the pugnacious MP William Hamilton's, or much milder ones, have met with (p. 104). In this land, though not presumably in the USA, a republican must needs be an atheistic incendiary. There is something here reminiscent of Church-in-danger Tory mobs of older times, and the perennial anger of the believer whom the sceptic tries to rob of his Saviour. At the great climaxes caste barriers are dissolved: 'A past-oriented, decorous, semi-divine unison takes over' (p. 92). Before the Coronation a newspaper commissioned a well-known artist to make a drawing of the Archiepiscopal hands which were to perform the miraculous transubstantiation of young woman into anointed Queen. The ceremony was presented as a mystic re-dedication to special moral and ideal values (p. 116), known to John Bull alone, what Rees-Mogg when editor of the *Times* called Britain's 'inner spiritual life' (p. 56).

An Oriental note can be heard in these fatuities. Swamis and Mahatmas and astrologers have been swarming out of the mysterious East into the gullible West; Britain has not been alone, it may be consoling to reflect, in this relapse into primitive superstition, any more than into drug-swallowing of other kinds. The Royal benediction takes the place of Church blessings we no longer have much faith in, to turn away from religion altogether would be disturbing to our No-Change mentality. God and King have alike been borne up by the moving staircase of history to an elevation where they are less mobile but more visible than ever before.

Royal and Ecclesiastical rituals bring men together in a fantasy substitute for the genuine reuniting that only socialism will be able to bring about.

Bishops booming, sergeants barking, bigwigs bowing, bugles braying, hearts beating, call up from the depths a wordless sensation shared by all. In the whole calendar the most impressive ceremony, carried by television from Whitehall into every home, is the Remembrance-day at the Cenotaph: a bizarre medley of military display, Christianity, official cant, and profound feeling—in part guilty feeling, because it is only on this day of the year that the war-dead are remembered. Their ghosts walk, and receive from the great ones and the many a tribute akin to ancestor-worship.

Nairn is struck by an 'increasingly weird combination' of uniqueness with human ordinariness in the pageant of Royalty we are daily regaled with (p. 11). Some such jumbling of ideas there has always been. Frenchmen were always alive to their Most Christian kings' amours and peccadilloes. Muslims regarded their sultan as the Shadow of God on earth, and admired him as the virile master of a large harem. There were always unholy churchmen as well as Holy Church. Moreover, in our day upward mobility is within the reach of many, and all must be as free as Malvolio in his cross-garters to think of rising in the social scale, even like Malvolio of a splendid marriage. To marry into the Royal Family may not yet be part of every Briton's dream, but it has been shown to be not impossible for commoners. We need a sense of familiarity with our icons, as well as veneration for them.

The *New Statesman's* 'This England' column has been a bountiful storehouse, an Ali Baba's cave, of a British inanity that no other country that ever was or is has matched; a veritable Fantasia of the national Unconscious. Royal iconography has been its richest contributor. There was a man who wanted the sovereign's image removed from postage-stamps, because he could not bear the thought of having to give her a blow in the face whenever he stamped a letter. Such a flood of such idiocy is only comprehensible when we bear in mind that the entire working class is now, by comparison with most of the earth's toilers, a labour aristocracy, and that it and the lower middle class devote a great number of their innumerable leisure hours to a frothy make-believe of drinking, gambling, sport, Hollywood romance. Writers and artists have joined in sweetening the saccharine Royal brew, Nairn notes (pp. 147, 273 ff., 291 ff.). They began being enlisted for this service long ago. When Disraeli was taking pains to gloss Victoria's aging image, he hit on the notion of bringing scientists into his Honours lists; and he and she jumped at the Earl of Derby's proposal of an award and pension for a literary man, Thomas Carlyle. The sage of Chelsea was vigorously anti-Gladstone, Derby observed, 'so it would be a really good political investment'. To their chagrin and his credit, Carlyle declined the bait.³ Nairn's quotations from writers of repute in recent years enshrine prodigies of bathos and imbecility such as even Poet Laureates (among the worst perpetrators), or the most antediluvian of Beneficed and Dignified Clergy, might be expected to blush at.

The Family Image

But amid all the absurdities of the charade, it stands out clearly enough

³ J. Sutherland, ed., *The Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes* (1978), no. 298.

that feeling about the monarchy focuses a general refusal to come to terms with the changing realities of our time. All strata turn nervously away from proposals of change, or *aggiornamenti*; the upper classes because they have too much to lose, and know they deserve to lose it, the lower because they have no socialist conviction of there being anything to gain. Equally clearly, the real purpose of all the Royal theatricalities is 'preserving and popularizing the informal authority of an élite' (p. 10); even if Nairn may go too far in identifying monarchy as the *only* means available for this in our time. There are élites under other skies too. Still, monarchy—whether in Britain or in Japan—does show a special gift for wrapping up the status quo in a cosy familial shawl. The nation is a happy family.

It is no accident that nowadays the Royal Family as a unit, a team, is what we are always hearing about. There is further comfort here for a society nervously aware that the family, exalted from Victorian times into an ark of the covenant, is showing many signs of wear and tear. We have no wish to put our necks back into the old yoke, but the thought of an idyllic Family where harmony reigns (with only an occasional mishap to relieve the monotony) pleases us. Similarly, we may not want to go to church ourselves, but we like to see our Sovereign performing this decent duty for us. Monarchy thus sustains bygone values whose place we have found nothing to fill, much as court dress perpetuates the costumes of long ago.

Nairn's retrospect of English evolution, or failure to evolve, is gloomy; at times almost querulous—he seems to make it a complaint that England had only 'a small and low-prestige land-army' (p. 259). 'Be to my faults a little kind', a protesting Britannia might exclaim—there are moles or beams in other eyes too. He is entitled to criticize the English revolution as premature, because a bourgeoisie had not yet ripened in the seventeenth century (p. 239). But France's revolution was delayed far too long, until many features imprinted by ages of despotism had become almost ineradicable. Englishmen accepted the leadership of Cromwell, 'our chief of men'; Frenchmen grovelled at the feet of a self-crowned Napoleon, and it was not their only return to autocracy. Timetables for revolution cannot be fixed in advance; no revolution has ever happened at the 'right time'—if there can ever be a right time.

Even after 1688 the State 'remained firmly tied to the epoch of the Renaissance' (p. 151.) Yet in nearly every respect England was a good hundred years ahead of France, two hundred ahead of Germany. 'British history since around 1800 is a slow and staged counter-revolution' (p. 215). What need could there be of counter-revolution, if England was already behind the times? Because modern capitalist production began—perhaps could only begin—with England's unique mode of agrarian capitalism, a landed oligarchy continued to wield far too much power, despite all democratic camouflage. But the USA, free of a monarchy or aristocracy, has been controlled by powerful groups of another sort. At the beginning of this century Ostrogorski's classic study showed the two systems working on parallel lines.⁶ No British politicking could be more vacuous than the presidential election of November 1988. Even the election campaign in Pakistan in the same month had somewhat more of meaningful dialogue between the People and its 'representatives'.

⁶ M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, London 1902.

Nairn wants a republic; but he recognizes that there has been no automatic link between political and economic progress (pp. 251-2), and both Germany and Japan embarked on their whirlwind industrialization—at fearful cost to themselves and to the world—under far more archaic regimes than Britain's. Nineteenth-century Spanish Democrats looked to a republican constitution as a cure-all; sad disenchantment awaited them. A republic carries no guarantee of either political or economic progress, a truth written large in the Latin-American record. Once or twice Nairn reverts to a controversy of years ago, and his book provokes some of the same queries as the argument about fainting Britain that he and Perry Anderson maintained then against E.P. Thompson. His account of a permanently retarded, crippled England leaves us to guess how such a country could have been the inaugurator of modern industrialism, technology and science. And where are the progressive European countries against which England is being measured? The best of them happen to be monarchies, if only mildly. Where has been the 'Republican democracy' that England is accused of lacking? Are we to look for it in the Weimar Republic, or in the Third Republic in France? or the Fourth? or the Fifth?

Britain must have suffered from 'the worsening neuroses of modernization' (p. 76), and they may have addled its brains a good deal; but many other peoples they reduced to fascism. Britain stands almost alone in Europe in this century in having avoided dictatorship or political decay, Nairn concedes (p. 318); surely a very considerable success, indicating a more than usually broad-based liberalism. Liberalism is not the same thing as democracy, and has virtues of its own. Everywhere bourgeois social norms came in only hesitantly, irregularly (p. 373), not as Marx expected in seven-league boots or with Tarquin's ravishing strides. Only at the end of his book (p. 375) does Nairn disclose that the bourgeois norm, unattained by Britain, was only really established by its European superiors about 1950. In that case there should still be time for Britain to catch up—or for them to fall back, as they have done in the past. Military defeat, not any healthy evolution, allowed or compelled them to don Liberal clothes. It is a very short time since Germany was rocked by a prominent politician's speech about Hitler. Sovereignty over some regions of southern Italy is disputed between rival cliques of the Mafia.

Britain's servile race of farm labourers has been altered only so far as to become a 'subservient urban peasantry' (p. 247). Was Carlyle right after all in believing that the dearest wish of Demos is to be ordered by his betters—that 'Govern us!' is his heart-cry? There is to be found in this book no sure and certain faith, scarcely the glimmer of a hope, of a glorious resurrection. At times its author seems almost driven to contemplate Thatcherism as a lesser evil; it is a 'regressive modernization', but at least a move away from stagnation (p. 162). Really it is of course a quite bogus spring-cleaning, sweeping away as much as it can of what is good for Britain, like the health service, and reinforcing what is bad. As Nairn fully realizes, a long-drawn process of industrial capitalism falling behind financial manipulation, with capital exported instead of invested at home, is only being carried further today (pp. 240-1, 250)—while Mrs Thatcher begs Japanese capitalists to invest in Britain. Plutocracy gorges itself now on the plunder of national assets at home, as formerly it battered on colonial resources. It is not clear what Nairn can mean when he speaks of

Royalty suffering, under Mrs Thatcher, 'the overdue assault of a *petit-bourgeois* Right' (p. 288). Mrs Thatcher is very unlikely, he grants, to try to demolish the Royal mythology (p. 351). As he has said earlier, it goes with 'a specifically anachronistic and parasitical form of capitalist evolution' (p. 236). Of this parasitism the Crown is the brightest jewel. Monarchy-mystification and Thatcherism form a perfect partnership: one keeps the public in a blissful haze, while the other goes through its pockets.

Nationalism

A stern and unbending foe to monarchy, Nairn is a champion of nationalism, of which it has been the lynch-pin or lantern. Marx assumed, too hopefully, that liberal parliamentarism would be the standard political medium in modern industrial societies. Nairn makes a similar assumption about nationalism. While in England class struggle has been the main stimulus, in much of Europe assertion of claims of nationality has been the prime mover: national liberation had to come before social (p. 308). Such has indeed been the working of modern history, but are we obliged to applaud it as the best conceivable path, or to put ethnic conflict on a higher plane than class struggle? Most of the results of Europe's strife of peoples, and of the setting free of nationalities, were awful. Today in Yugoslavia we see Serbs and Albanians at loggerheads, in the USSR a senselessly murderous feud between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. One cannot but suspect a touch of Scottish nostalgia in Nairn's idea of the nation-state as the 'universal form' of social mobilization for the tasks of our time (p. 131; cf. p. 128). Korea has had a very old pre-industrial national consciousness; but it has been industrializing while cut into two hostile parts, each under dictatorial rule, backed in one of them by a foreign army of occupation.

Nairn objects to the term 'Great Britain' (originally adopted as a geographical expression, for the sake of differentiation from 'Britain', or 'Little Britain', meaning Brittany). Part of his objection to the monarchy is that it is *British*, not English, and thus ratifies an unnatural Union, a shackling together of two peoples, English and Scots (to say nothing of the Welsh). This took place before the modern symbiosis of nationality and State. Britain is not a 'nation-state', but the reverse, a 'state-nation' welded together by military and political power (p. 347). So are France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia; so too were Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania—not to mention Scotland, which started as an extraordinary ethnic jumble with four principal languages, pre-Aryan or Aryan: Pictish, British (Welsh), Gaelic, English—and was welded together by invasion from Ireland. It may be added that while London does not strive officiously to keep Gaelic or Welsh alive, Paris does its utmost to silence Breton, as Franco's Spain did with Catalan.

Nairn looks to nationalism to eliminate artificial social divisions, and bring uniformity of habits. How much of this is necessary to modern life may be open to question. N.R. Sheth's study of an Indian factory shows that effective operation need not be hampered by diversities of religion, caste, language, customs.⁷ A study of the great Indian steel firm of Tata

⁷ N.R. Sheth, *The Social Framework of an Indian Factory*, 2nd edn, Delhi 1981.

reaches a similar conclusion.⁸ Dividing and ruling the labour force is part of the secret, but by Indian standards at any rate Tata has been a model employer. Leaving this aside, doubts must remain about Nairn's tenet that nationalism, in spite of Hitler and his congeners, has been on the whole a progressive, modernizing force. Undoubtedly it has done much to modernize the art of war. There seems too much of eighteenth-century rationalism in the argument: if all patriots were as sensible and forward-looking and good-tempered as few outside Scotland have ever been, an *Europe des patries* might well be a fine place. But the true, genuine, authentic Nation has been more a Platonic Idea than an actuality. Some of Nairn's subtle distinctions between the proper and the improper may remind readers of the words he quotes from an impatient George III to a minister advising him on a delicate constitutional point: 'None of your Scotch metaphysics, Mr Dundas, none of your Scotch metaphysics!'

All the same, it is no small merit of nationality instinct that in Scotland and Wales, as he says, Royal humbug is less greedily swallowed than in England (p. 107), and Thatcherite trumpery scarcely at all. Desperate diseases call for desperate remedies; and after so many years of Thatcherism, Scotland seems at last ready to try one, by breaking away from the Union. However so small a country might fare in a Europe of multinationals and billionaires, its breakaway—unlike Ireland's—might at last shake John Bull out of his drowsy self-complacency. It might set going a train of more far-reaching consequences. All the British Isles were once Celtic. Today they are the last home of nearly all that is left of the ill-starred Celtic 'race'. Southern Scotland and northern and western England remained Celtic for much longer than the south-east, which now presumes to lay down the law to everyone else; embers of what they were still smoulder under the surface. The present writer, a mixture of English, Irish and Ulster-Scottish—and on the whole liking better to be a mixture than a monolith—after half a lifetime in Scotland feels much inclined now to strain his eyes for a gleam on the far horizon of a Celtic Confederation, within which the genius of an ancient people might come at last to full flower.

Still, even as things are, Britain is not in quite the condition of total, all-round moribundity that Nairn's despondent tones imply. Its scientists continue to make discoveries, mostly for foreign benefit as our government declines to sponsor them, and financiers avid for quick kills take no interest. It has a corps of historians second to none in the world. Its root trouble is the ever-widening gap—mental more than social or pecuniary—between the part of the population capable and desirous of thinking, and the majority. Royalty furnishes a sham bridge between them, or a lowest common denominator. Any party seeing itself as the vanguard of the proletariat soon finds that it has marched ahead and disappeared out of sight. Nairn feels the difficulty of disagreeing firmly with the majority on issues like the monarchy, without falling into élitism, coming to think of the masses as 'a passive, wholly manipulable entity' (pp. 52–3). But if the masses are, in some important respects, asses, ought he not to say so? His admirably original and penetrating book is long, and too complex and 'literate' to be always simple reading. He should try his hand at writing a

⁸ Satya Brata Dutta, *Capital Accumulation and Workers' Struggle in Indian Industrialization. The Case of Tata Iron and Steel Company 1920–1970*, Stockholm 1986.

shorter, terser version, for the man in the street (bearing in mind that today the man in the street is not standing or walking there, but bowling along in his car, so that his attention is harder to catch).⁹

Nairn may be putting the cart before the horse when he ends by insisting on republicanism, to release a 'revolution of national identity', as a precondition of social-economic progress (p. 387). Scotsmen may worry about their identity, but Englishmen seldom do so; and a movement preaching that there can be no progress until monarchy is got rid of would be one more ineffectual splinter-group. Abolition of monarchy and all its outposts will have to come bit by bit, in the course of other campaigns—for instance, against the farce of hereditary voting in the Second Chamber. An investigation of royal finances, in the interests of economy, that virtue so dear to Tory means-testers, will be one of the bits. Nairn has made his task harder by his estimate of the public's 'permanent and almost unshakable adoration' of the monarchy (p. 19). Is this too much like an admission of defeat before the battle begins? If Demos had to choose between losing his Royal Family and losing his football, or football-pools, he would ditch the Family without a second thought. In all such fields of social psychology there is much collective self-hypnosis. We each believe that everyone else can see the Emperor's Clothes.

Institutions in old age, like men and women, need thick paint to make them young. By counting decibels in the loyal media we can measure the real strength or decrepitude of the monarchy. A generation ago it and empire appeared indivisible and equally immortal. Now 'the wide arch of the ranged empire' has collapsed like Rome's, and John Bull lost it in a fit of absence of mind, scarcely noticing. Who knows whether we may not see the rest of the Family following Edward VIII to America, where Shaw's King Magnus was invited to set up shop half a century ago?

Buckingham Palace turned into a tourist hotel, the crown jewels sold off, would be a tonic not only for progressives, but for *bona fide* manufacturers: they too have many a promising companion to regret who left them 'just for a ribbon to stick in his coat'. But is a more energetic class of entrepreneurs really the *summum bonum* we ought to fix our minds on? Behind Tom Nairn's eagerness to see more factory chimneys smoking must lurk the old Marxian conviction that more industry means more socialists. Unfortunately it does not. Perhaps we ought to make a virtue of necessity and search for something positive in the phase that Britain is passing through. This country started the industrial revolution, and may have been chosen by destiny to start the new age, with industrial production levelling off, that mankind *must* enter before long if the planet is to remain capable of supporting human life. The West has enough production by now to satisfy any rational wants; if more is needed for the poor, it can be taken from the rich. There should be a standstill of development in lands already affluent until a new technology, harnessing sun and tides, is ready to usher in a cleaner, less destructive civilization. Until then, if the Royal dummy in the British mouth is an indispensable sedative, we may hail it as an unusually intelligent 'ruse of History'.

⁹ Though I am glad to add that Nairn has written a TV programme on the monarchy, transmitted in December 1988 by Channel Four

Frankenstein Monsters

The poetry and prose of the Romantics (Richard Holmes writes in *Shelley: The Poet*) was born of a 'disturbed and excited political period... which flashes up through the years towards our own'. Certainly, we have come a long way since 1789. And yet there are uncanny resemblances between our situation and that of Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Shelley circle. A great revolution which went wrong, men thrown out of work by machinery, foreign wars distracting a people from its real problems, a government doing its best to whittle away civil liberties, small groups of intellectuals who felt deeply alienated from society and spent much time discussing communes, free love and a revolution in personal relationships. One could go on.

That is one reason why we still find the Romantics fascinating. Another is the colour and dramatic appeal of their personal lives. Poets dying young, leaving a long trail of dead or damaged women and children, the shadow of the guillotine, incest, horror, madness (Gothic novels had a huge influence on the younger Romantics; Shelley was both a serious revolutionary and a connoisseur of the horrific.) It is this kind of debased Romanticism which inspires all those bad books and films about the Scarlet Pimpernel, Lady Caroline Lamb, and so on. It is summed up in the charismatic figure of Byron, who was a good poet and (up to a point) a radical but is remembered chiefly for his life-style. 'Byron is often loosely compared to rock or movie stars as a figure of international glamour,' writes Rupert Christiansen, '... but he perhaps most resembles them in his personality disorders—paranoiac irritability, an insistence on his status, an addiction to compliment, unthinking self-centredness.'¹

This is one of many thought-provoking remarks scattered through Christiansen's book. It grew out of the experience of marking A-level papers and finding that the students had simply failed to grasp the passion and anger of the period. 'So I have tried here to portray the temper of an age... to show the electric interaction of, and affinity between, people, language, ideas and events; and to suggest some of the excitement and urgency that was felt at the time.' And indeed his work, unlike the teenagers', is never boring. It treats Romanticism as a European movement, beginning with Chénier writing poetry on the eve of his execution and ending with Pushkin dying in a duel. It hops, there is no other word, from England to France to Italy to Russia and from one big name or

¹ Rupert Christiansen, *Romantic Affinities: Portraits from an Age, 1780-1830*, London 1988

larger-than-life personality to the next one. All the well-known anecdotes are here: Wordsworth hearing the news of Robespierre's death, Hölderlin smashing his piano, Mary Wollstonecraft jumping in the river. The story is told in flashes, not chronologically, thus, Shelley is dead in one chapter and alive in the next. This can be quite confusing. But it does not mean that the book is superficial. Christiansen knows his subject and writes agreeably; he has interesting chapters on Shakespearomania and on the position of women; and he may well persuade the general reader to go deeper into Romanticism. For a serious work of scholarship, though, we must turn to Nicholas Roe.

Revolution and The Aftermath

Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years is a careful reconstruction of the political lives of the two young poets between 1789 and 1798, and of their context.² The author argues that Coleridge, especially, was much more involved in the reform movement than he would later admit, and that his collapse as a writer and a human being was caused by its failure. The last is difficult to prove, perhaps, but there is ample evidence that Coleridge in the 1790s had very close links with the London and Cambridge radicals, and that he wrote and preached in favour of electoral reform and against the French war. If he did go to pieces out of political disillusionment, it is not surprising. Roe shows just how hard a time English radicals had in these years, and gives helpful information on half-forgotten figures like William Frend and John Thelwall, reformers who were made to suffer for their (very reasonable) beliefs.

The book also traces Wordsworth's movements in France in the early 1790s. He was 'pretty hot in it', and seems to have been an honorary member of a revolutionary club in Blois. While there he became aware that the Revolution was not simply about constitutional reforms but had to do with improving the lives of ordinary people. 'I find almost all the people of any opulence are aristocrats and all the others democrates', he wrote. One of his most memorable experiences, which eventually got into *The Prelude*, was seeing a 'hunger-bitten girl' leading a heifer when he was with his friend Beaupuy:

At the sight my friend
In agitation said, 'Tis against that
Which we are fighting', I with him believed
Devoutly that a spirit was abroad
Which would not be withstood, that poverty,
At least like this, would in a little time
Be found no more.

His concern for the poor and inarticulate stayed with him long after he had ceased to be a revolutionary. But in 1792 he arrived in Paris in the wake of the September Massacres, which had made an indelible impression on public opinion in his own country. Alone in his room, he brooded about them and felt partly responsible because he had been on the same side as the Paris mob whose 'vengeance' had 'been savage and inhuman'.

² Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years*, Oxford 1988.

He was not responsible, of course. Nor was it only revolutionaries who shed blood at that or any other time. But the massacres, and the way they were used by the (government-controlled) press in England, caused a deep sense of guilt among radicals and caused them to deny, over and over again, that they had any sympathy with violence. The 'overriding concern' of one of the bravest reformers, John Thelwall, was 'to counsel "the common people" against violence. . . . he was apprehensive that, if the reformists were provoked into violent opposition, the government would use such disturbance as a pretext for establishing their own system of terror.'

In fact, almost all the violence in England during the Revolution years came from the right. Church-and-king mobs burned books, wrecked Dissenting meeting-houses and Priestley's laboratory, and attacked political lecturers like Thelwall who 'narrowly escaped assassination'. There was also the organized violence of the French war, for which men were press-ganged and the workers' standard of living forced down. By contrast, the English reformers seem extremely moderate, asking only for a broader franchise, religious toleration, and later an end to the war. It was they, though, who were typecast in popular consciousness as bloodthirsty monsters.

Many of them gave up politics in despair or became reactionary. The only good thing to come out of these years of repression was that 'the 1790s saw an alteration in the structure of feeling for the poor and disenfranchised among articulate liberals, radicals and dissenters. This is evident in a sympathetic emotional identification with social victims that is very different, for example, from the patronizing attitude of the SCI to "the poor man" in the 1780s.' Like Wordsworth encountering the anonymous French girl, William Frend was shaken by his meeting with a group of market women from Cambridgeshire. 'Let others talk of glory, let others celebrate the heroes, who are to deluge the world with blood, the words of the poor market women will still resound in my ears, we are sconded three-pence in the shilling, one fourth of our labour. For what!' Wordsworth himself, Roe argues, developed 'from poet of protest to poet of human suffering', never losing his sympathy with ordinary people, and survived an experience which shattered Coleridge.

Another survivor was William Godwin, a revered figure in progressive circles, a link between the older and younger Romantics, and one of the few radical writers who escaped prosecution; the government felt that 'a three-guinea book could never do much harm amongst those who had not three shillings to spare'. The book was *Political Justice* (1793), which Coleridge disliked but which had a strong though temporary influence on Wordsworth. Many other readers liked it because it preached change without violence. The revolution would happen by itself, Godwin assured them. 'When the true crisis shall come, not a sword will need to be drawn, not a finger to be lifted up.' There were some who doubted whether this kind of change in human nature was possible: 'If man be benevolent & wise: it certainly is unnecessary that there should be Promises, Gratitude, Restraints, Law, Religion &c: But he is short sighted & selfish, & without these restraints he is a monster.'

The government was right to think that Godwin posed no real threat.

When Shelley, in his *Address to the Irish People* (1812), spoke passionately about the sufferings of the working class, Godwin was appalled. 'You talk of awakening them', he wrote, 'they will rise up like Cadmus' seed of dragon's teeth, and their first act will be to destroy each other.' Godwin's brilliant daughter by Mary Wollstonecraft inherited his distrust of the common people.

Mary Shelley has had a lot of attention in recent years, mainly from feminists who want to rescue her from the shadow of her father and husband (although the name of her best book is well known, hers is not). Two new studies have just appeared, as well as a volume of essays, edited by Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Feminism*.³

Is there a connection? It was a time when many radical ideas, including that of sexual equality, were in the air, but the actual women who surrounded the Romantics had a poor deal and often ended up in the reactionary camp. Several Jacobins had traditionalist views on the subject and Byron, surely the worst chauvinist of all English poets, wrote: 'They ought to mind home—and be well fed and clothed—but not mixed in society. Well educated too, in religion—but to read neither poetry nor politics—nothing but books of piety and cookery.' Anne Mellor, in her introduction, argues rather wildly that the Romantics wrote as upper-class, university-educated men (Blake? Keats? Clare?) and that their work 'legitimized the continued repression of women'. More convincingly, she points out that critics have concentrated on the 'big six' male poets, reinforcing the 'capitalist belief in the primacy of the individual over the group'. She believes we must 'open and reshape the literary canon' and pay more sympathetic attention to 'the hundreds of male and female writers working in the early nineteenth century'.

This is a task which has only just begun, and the essays in this volume are uneven. I did not feel that they added much to my understanding of the best-known Romantics, but the last section, 'The Women Respond', is very interesting. Here are studies of a whole galaxy of female poets, long forgotten, and of two gifted women, Mary Lamb and Dorothy Wordsworth, who tried to lead utterly unselfish lives, and who suffered mental breakdowns. Dorothy devoted herself to nourishing William's talents ('almost his very Eating and Drinking are done for him by his Sister, or his wife', Coleridge wrote enviously), while strenuously denying that she had any talent herself. He was primarily interested in the development of his own mind; she was warmly involved with the community and one of the few things she published (anonymously) was a narrative designed to raise money for a family of orphaned children. There are also essays on Mary Wollstonecraft's fiction and on *Frankenstein* (compressed from Anne Mellor's *Mary Shelley*).

Colonization of the Feminine

Of all the Romantics' women friends, Mary was the most professional writer and arguably the most interesting person. She wrote *Frankenstein* as a teenage girl, creating one of the most potent myths in Western culture,

³ Anne K. Mellor, ed., *Romanticism and Feminism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1988

and then produced hardly anything else of value for the remaining thirty years of her life. Muriel Spark's biography is a complete revision of her *Child of Light* (1951).⁴ The first half tells the story of Mary's life, taking into account some new evidence, the second discusses *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*—the striking novel she wrote after Shelley's death and which is now back in print—as well as some minor works.

Anne Mellor, too, discusses both novels in depth. As a *life* of Mary Shelley, her book is inadequate; Muriel Spark does the job more competently. Yet her work seems to me the more interesting of the two, mainly because of its superb long discussion of *Frankenstein*. Mary's fiction, it is argued, was moulded by her experiences as a woman and by the memory of the French Revolution.

Alan Richardson's essay in *Romanticism and Feminism* points out that the Romantics colonized the feminine, rejecting the traditional split between rational male/emotional female and taking over 'the conventionally feminine domain of sensibility'. At the same time many literary women were trying to 'demonstrate their claims to common sense', but Mary Shelley was not one of them. Her work is profoundly non-realistic; and her morality insists on the importance of emotion. The culture in which she had been brought up dismissed women's feelings for their children as irrational. As Godwin wrote to her after her first son died: 'I cannot but consider it as lowering your character. . . . you have lost a child; and all the rest of the world, all that is beautiful, and all that has a claim upon your kindness, is nothing, because a child of three years old is dead!' Her step-sister Claire was treated then and afterwards as a hysterical and unreasonable woman because she tried to get her child away from an uncaring father. Clearly, the radicalism of Godwin and Byron was bounded by their masculinity.

Percy Shelley considered himself a strong feminist, but Anne Mellor, in her major work on Mary Shelley, claims that he had a 'harem psychology', took no interest in his female children, and undervalued his wife's work.⁵ We know that Mary was depressed for years before his death and that afterwards she distanced herself from his politics. It was Harriet, not she, who warmly supported his revolutionary views. In later life she declined to publish the *Philosophical Views of Reform*, one of his most radical prose texts, and also Godwin's anti-religious *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled*. She justified this on the grounds that she had to consider her situation as an unsupported mother, and besides: 'What can I care for the parties that divide the world or the opinions that possess it? What has my life been? . . . One thing I will add—if I have ever found kindness it has not been from Liberals—to disengage myself from them was the first act of my freedom—the consequence was that I gained peace and civil usage.' This might seem an unworthy, typically 'feminine' argument. But, like other women in her circle, Mary had learned through experience that the personal is political. Any ideology which did not give full value to the claims of women and children seemed to her dangerously flawed.

⁴ Muriel Spark, *Mary Shelley*, London 1988

⁵ Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley. Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, New York 1988

'*Frankenstein*,' Anne Mellor says, 'is a book about what happens when a man tries to have a baby without a woman.' It is true that Mary was a teenager when she wrote it, but besides being an unusually well-read and politically conscious teenager, she had already had some intense experiences which are not available to men. She was the mother of one dead and one living child; a third baby was conceived during the time of writing. Around the same time, she learned of the suicides of her half-sister Fanny and of Harriet Shelley, both of them—as an illegitimate child and an abandoned wife—misfits. Mary must have felt a measure of guilt over both deaths, and it is hardly surprising that her book is littered with the corpses of young women and children.

Guilt, and the fear of losing loved ones, are the most powerful emotions in this novel. The happy Frankenstein family is wiped out by a series of tragedies as a direct result of Frankenstein's 'unhallowed arts'. He is so determined to make a new man that he first neglects those who have a claim on him and then exposes them to the monster's revenge. This is the worst sin possible for Mary, who set a high value on the nuclear family: 'If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections. . . . then that study is certainly unlawful. . . . If this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved; Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.'

Today we may see Victor Frankenstein as an early Dr Strangelove; while Shelley looked forward to a time when science could provide a good life for all, Mary had much darker visions of genetic engineering and the death of the human race. But this passage could also be read as a plea for 'gradualism' in politics; Anne Mellor argues convincingly that Mary Shelley's attitude to her monster is rooted in her fear of revolution. She accuses her, perhaps too harshly, of 'deep aversion to the lower classes' and 'racist chauvinism'. Travelling through France with Shelley two years before the novel was written, Mary noted that the peasants were 'squalid with dirt. . . . disgusting and brutal'. The Germans they met were 'of the meanest class. . . . horrid and slimy. . . . our only wish was to absolutely annihilate such uncleanly animals'. Claire Clairmont wrote down a revealing conversation between the three of them: 'Shelley said there would come a time when no where on earth, would there be a dirty cottage to be found—Mary asked what time would elapse before that time would come—he said perhaps in a thousand years—we said perhaps it would never come, as it was so difficult to persuade the poor to be clean.' (Presumably they would only keep coal in the bath.) This encapsulates the young Romantics' attitude to 'the poor'—objects of sympathy, people who can perhaps be helped, but 'squalid', 'uncleanly', and above all *other*. This is also Frankenstein's attitude to the creature he makes.

The Monster Unleashed

The monster is eight feet tall and far stronger than the average man; Anne Mellor points out that the people of Paris during the Terror were envisaged as a Hercules or 'monstrous male giant'. He thus becomes an

emblem for the French Revolution itself.' In a development which Mary cannot have foreseen, and which may not have pleased her, Canning in 1824, in a speech opposing the freeing of slaves in the West Indies, said: 'To turn the Negro loose in the manhood of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, but in the infancy of his uninstructed reason, would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid fiction of a recent romance; the hero of which. . . finds too late that he has only created a more than mortal power of doing mischief, and himself recoils from the monster he has made.'

Virtually all writers of the time, including Shelley, were terrified of what might happen if the people rose in revolt. Yet Mary's attitude to her monster is not one of simple hostility, and the reader is forced to see his point of view. He echoes the hopeful philosophies of Rousseau and Godwin—'I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend'—and makes us question our attitudes to those who are handicapped or somehow 'different'. Paul Foot has argued that the monster 'represents the potential in mankind—of co-operation and brotherhood on the one hand; of isolation, violence and ruin on the other. . . It is the *spawning* of the revolutionary image, rather than the image itself, which leads to catastrophe.'⁶

Yet, in the end, *Frankenstein* is a pessimistic novel. The monster cannot fit into the human family; even the kindest and most enlightened fear him. Although Shelley's views became more revolutionary after 1816 (in response to real acts of violence by the State, like Peterloo), Mary moved steadily rightwards as she grew older. Her novel *The Last Man* (1826) is a sad sequel to the Romantic vision of communities held together by love. Instead, politicians jostle for power in the time-honoured way, the Shelley-figure fails to achieve anything and eventually the human race is wiped out. Although Wordsworth, Coleridge and even (intermittently) Byron felt real sympathy for the working people, Mary had very little faith in them.

But if we reject her view of the people as monster, need we also reject her insistence that feelings and relationships are important? Anne Mellor argues—and I do not think she is reading too much into *Frankenstein*—that Mary had some specifically 'female' insights. Her novel is a 'feminist critique of science'; Frankenstein attempts to make women redundant and deprive them of their 'source of cultural power'; the result is a monster who is 'unmothered' and therefore becomes evil. She quotes the present-day moral philosopher, Carol Gilligan: 'A male "ethic of justice" proceeds from the premise of equality—that everyone should be treated the same"—while a female "ethic of care" rests on the premise of non-violence—that no one should be hurt.' Mary, then, wished men to reject violence and self-glorification and to become more like women, with their 'primary commitment to the preservation of human life'. 'All her novels,' Anne Mellor concludes (with particular reference to *The Last Man*), 'show the ways in which an uninhibited male egoism contributes to human suffering and may even cause the annihilation of human civilization.'

I have some criticisms of Anne Mellor's book, but not many. For

⁶ In his *Red Shelley*, London 1980, p. 134.

instance, Mary did not always shrink from the poor as is claimed but showed real sympathy with the women lacemakers of Buckinghamshire; Shelley did not patronize her but felt that she far surpassed him 'in originality, in genuine elevation and magnificence of the intellectual nature until she consented to share her capabilities with me'. The reference to Harriet Shelley's 'stuck-up airs' is unfair. Strangest of all, describing Mary's idealization of the bourgeois family, Anne Mellor writes. 'From the ideological perspective provided by modern socialist-feminist theory, we can posit an alternative model of family and class relationships to that presented in Mary Shelley's fiction. This is the model of the working-class family in which children are raised to pass into adult responsibility and to contribute to the financial resources of the household as quickly as possible.' She isn't advocating child labour, surely?

After the age of twenty-eight, Mary wrote some good criticism but no more good novels. Like Claire Clairmont, she lived on, a lonely and disillusioned woman, for long empty years after the young Romantics had died. She did a great deal of hack-work to support her son, who rewarded her by becoming a respectable and fairly philistine baronet. In 1848, another year of revolutions, she took the view that France was spreading 'wicked and desolating principles amongst all the nations' and that the Irish and Chartists were 'full of menace'. She died in 1851 having written nothing for years. It was a disappointing end for the woman whom Shelley had called a 'child of love and light'. But *Frankenstein* remains, and each generation will reinterpret it in its own way.

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The NATO summit, held at the end of May, has confirmed that the future direction of Europe is more open than at any time in the Alliance's forty-year history. The eventual compromise over short-range missile negotiations, together with Washington's minimal last-minute concessions on disarmament, allowed NATO propagandists in each country to paint a picture of unity and common purpose, and certainly there can be no doubting the eagerness of the Bush and Kohl administrations to solder West Germany firmly if more influentially into the Atlantic system. However, the economic and political contradictions within that system—expressed most acutely, for the moment, in the growing desperation and division of Britain's Conservative Party—give the lie to the carefully managed display of birthday jollity. On the eve of Gorbachev's visit to the Federal Republic, there is still a real possibility that Bonn's independent foreign policy interests will eventually combine with the strength of popular anti-militarist sentiment to open up a genuine process of East-West cooperation in Europe, one which will challenge the anti-Communist foundations of the post-war Atlantic order.

In this issue, Patrick Camiller argues that the renewal of Europe's hitherto fragmented Left must centrally address the continent-wide politics which have come onto the agenda with the reform process in the Soviet Union, and which are becoming ever more necessary in an age of economic dislocation, ecological destruction and military insecurity. Social-democratic national Keynesianism, a creature of the post-war boom, has universally failed to tackle the prolonged crisis of the past fifteen years. But nor do the narrow, half-European horizons of 1992 offer any solid prospect of recovery of the productive economy, imbued as they are with the anarchic spirit of capital unbound. As the West European governments prepare to give up many of their national regulatory levers, an alliance between the Western Left and socialist reform forces in the East could throw back the neo-liberal offensive of the past decade and place planned social advance once again at the heart of debate on the continent.

In recent years, the changing forms of capitalist regulation have given

rise on the Left to a hypothetical model of 'post-Fordist' flexible accumulation, analogous to the Fordist system of relations extensively analysed by the Regulation School. Michael Rustin subjects the claims of this new model to a judicious critique, recognizing its synthetic ambitions but arguing that it does not adequately comprehend the variegated nature of capitalist strategies in the eighties. Those who seek to ground socialist politics on post-Fordist 'new times' are, in Rustin's view, in danger of confusing the interests and world-view of the technical intelligentsia with those of the working population as a whole—and of making the latter in practice subordinate to the former.

For nearly two generations the exploration of social class has been a central project for British sociologists. This substantial body of work generally focused upon experience at the workplace, shifts in the occupational structure, differential consumption patterns, and the impact of such factors on social and political attitudes. But as Nicky Hart shows, little conscious attempt was made to investigate the significance of gender differentials in household consumption and labour. In a suggestive essay of reconstruction, she assembles evidence of a systematic inequality between male and female patterns of material life, tending towards a characteristic gender gap in politics.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war triggered a new onslaught by the Baghdad regime on the Kurdish population of northern Iraq, involving the murderous use of poison-gas weapons and the forcible depopulation of hundreds of villages. Mohammed Malek here traces the vicissitudes of the Kurdish struggle in Iraq, Turkey and Iran since the outbreak of the revolt in 1961, and critically assesses the policies and perspectives of the nationalist leaderships. While registering the cultural and political developments which have made the idea of a unified Kurdish state increasingly problematic, Malek enters a powerful appeal for respect of Kurdish national rights by the majority nations of the region.

The canonization within literary and cultural studies of one highly selective version of 'modernism' has long delayed the kind of formal differentiation and historical perspective vital to a full understanding of aesthetic modernity. In a lecture reconstructed by Fred Inglis from detailed notes, and taken from a forthcoming Verso collection of late work, 'The Politics of Modernism', Raymond Williams summarily traces the source of this blockage to the specific yet dynamic relations of production of

modernist cultural practice. In a later phase, the ideology of artistic self-referentiality and social estrangement resurfaced as the ready commodification of modernist techniques and images by the protean advertising industry of late capitalism. Williams urges a turn away from post-modern impasses to the task of recovering for the future a richer and more diverse account of the modernist tradition.

The death of C.L.R. James has robbed us of a steadfast internationalist, a living link to the classic revolutionary generation of the first half of the century. His libertarian communist ideals and courage have heightened value at a time when we see around us the moral and political ruin of so many authoritarian and nationalist Communisms. James was born in Trinidad in 1901 and his life was to include critical collaboration with such towering figures as Paul Robeson, Leon Trotsky and George Padmore. James's writings on black history and the French Revolution, on anti-statist socialism and popular culture, on the destiny of the Caribbean and the universalism that should imbue revolutionary politics help to extend and elevate the Marxism of our century. In this issue we publish a review written before James's death of a recent intellectual biography, 'The Artist as Revolutionary', by Paul Buhle, which begins the work of assessing the rich legacy bequeathed to us by this outstanding Afroamerican.

In two further reviews Paul Buhle considers the three-year record and achievement of 'The Year Left', the American socialist yearbook published by Verso, while Carlos Vilas discusses James Dunkerley's major new work on Central America, 'Power in the Isthmus'.



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Beyond 1992: The Left and Europe

The wave of publicity in preparation for the broad internal market of 1992 has struck a powerful chord throughout Western Europe, including in a traditionally introverted country such as Britain where opinion polls suggest that large sections of the population are considerably more enthusiastic than their government about a new continental identity. Even more striking has been the popular response to the new leadership in the Soviet Union—a response going far beyond sectors mobilized in the new peace movement of the eighties, and one so strong that the NATO establishment has been forced to abandon, or has great difficulty in carrying through, elements of its plan to establish techno-military superiority in Europe. This is not just a question of the reformist impetus behind perestroika and glasnost, nor only of the disarmament initiatives launched by the Soviet government, important as both of these have been. The recognition by the Gorbachev leadership of the interdependence of world politics and economics, together with repeated references to the common European home, represent a potent challenge to

the Cold War Atlanticism that served as the ideological cement of the post-war capitalist order and contributed to the national and organizational divisions of the European Left.

The Left in Western Europe now finds itself in a quite original situation where the task of renewing its own programme and organization is posed at the same time as the development of new kinds of European-level politics. Or rather, the two tasks are posed *together*, in a complex way that we are only now beginning to grapple with. Of course, everyone attending this *coloquio* is in some way descended from the experience of socialist organization in the pre-1914 Second International, and the internationalism of the best forces within that tradition remains an inspiration for us today.* This is not the place to go into the subjective and objective reasons why that tradition broke down in August 1914, and why it ultimately failed to regenerate itself in the Third International and the subsequent history of the twentieth century. But we do need to grasp the scale of the change that has taken place. A hundred years ago, as European capital was plunging into the accumulation race that would lead to the First World War, the socialist movement could rightly claim to be the inheritor of the Enlightenment ideal of a Europe in which national antagonisms had been overcome. Today, after decades in which labour parties and trade unions in Western Europe have thrown their weight behind the accumulation strategies of their respective national capitals within a framework of Atlanticist loyalism, the ideological and organizational basis for socialist unity in Europe has still largely to be re-created. And it has to be re-created in conditions where a tightly circumscribed European agenda is being defined by the needs of massive capitalist corporations operating at an international level, but where for the first time since 1947 the political division of Europe is being questioned in the East.

It has become almost a commonplace to say that the labour movement lags behind capital in its international coordination and consciousness, and various explanations have been given for this starting with the simple discrepancy in financial resources. But it is hard to believe that today's labour movement—which, despite a certain decline in recent years, rests upon far stronger unions than half-a-century ago—is materially less capable of reaching the level, if not the forms, of international life attained in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If the Socialist International, for example, is little more than an inorganic collection of parties, this is essentially because its various national leaderships have seen no political basis for joint action or, to put it another way, have lacked any vision of Europe and the broader world that does not start from the requirements of the dominant fractions of national capital. Ironically it is only now, when decisive sections of capital are moving towards a restructuring of the West European market, that the Left is beginning once again to conceive of itself as a potentially international force. More ironic still, it is

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mainly the revival of Ostpolitik tendencies within the Bonn establishment which has placed on the agenda of the West European Left the possibility of re-forging links with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This is a time of important new prospects. But there is also a grave danger that the Left will simply be carried along by the Europeanist rhetoric of 1992, failing either to see the real social-economic content of the project or to grasp the opportunity to advance a European programme of its own.

From 1973 to 1992

The 1992 project can only be understood in the light of the neo-liberal reorientation of economic policy that began in the United States and Western Europe in the mid seventies. The post-war capitalist growth model, it is widely agreed, rested upon a distinctive articulation of six elements: (a) increasingly concentrated production of standardized commodities within a structure of Taylorized work routines; (b) a high-wage, high-productivity, high-employment capital-labour bargaining system, providing an expanding market for consumer-goods output; (c) a higher level of state ownership, particularly in infrastructure and basic industries; (d) fiscal redistribution of income within, and to a limited extent between, social classes; (e) Keynesian mechanisms of demand stimulation; (f) public provision of universal systems of health, education, income support, etc. Now, in different ways and at different rhythms, all of these pillars have come under attack over the past fifteen years. The main trends have been: (a) decentralization and 'flexibilization' of the production process; (b) segmentation of the labour market, with high levels of structural unemployment; (c) privatization or deregulation of sectors of the economy owned by the state; (d) a sometimes quite sharp cutting of redistributive taxation; (e) a tendency towards privatization, reduction or segmentation of welfare-state services. The precise justification of this shift, and certainly the degree to which it has been put into practice, have varied considerably with the inherited political discourse of each EC country, but there can be no question that we are facing a general trend that is making itself felt even in non-EC countries like Austria or Sweden.

In the ideology of neo-liberalism—or perhaps 'anarcho-capitalism' would be a more accurate term—the post-war model set up a number of barriers (powerful trade unions, 'restrictive practices', state monopolies, fiscal disincentives) which constrained the rationalizing dynamic of the market and prevented private capital and national economies from adapting to new opportunities and a changed international environment. The aim of the various restructuring programmes of the last decade has thus been to increase the profitability levels of private capital—first of all by creating more favourable labour-market conditions (wage-skill segmentation, erosion of trade union rights and bargaining positions), but also by reducing corporate and middle-class taxation and by opening up new areas for investment through privatization drives. Whether large-scale unemployment is to be an intrinsic part of the model, or whether its main function is as a transitional discipline lowering the expectations of the labour force, is a question that can hardly be determined in advance. What is clear

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is that a decade of neo-liberalism has brought precious little new investment in productive industry, and that more government effort has gone into bogus youth schemes and various forms of statistical manipulation than into serious attempts to bring down the rate of unemployment in Western Europe.

Nor is it possible to say with any assurance whether post-Fordist 'flexible accumulation' could ever become a viable component of a new overall political-economic strategy. As a number of observers have noted, now that the Friedmanite-Reaganomics heyday has passed, the present climate is marked by incoherence or paralysis in official economic policy and far-reaching business uncertainty about the long-term conditions of production, with the coexistence of different geological strata in each national economy. We do not stand in the kind of situation that presented itself in 1951, when the capitalist world was gearing itself up for a new surge of expansion on the basis of a strong, shared and consistent model of development. Inter-imperialist competition, political divisions, working-class resistance, the debt crisis—these are just some of the factors that will influence the outcome. And we should remember that in 1931, when the capitalist world last faced such a crisis of perspectives, it did not easily issue in a new period of growth and stability.

What, then, is the significance of 1992 within this context? An article by John Grahl and Paul Teague in NLR 174 has convincingly shown that the 1992 project rests on essential aspects of the neo-liberal agenda of the 1980s. Whatever elements of indicative planning it may originally have contained, the programme of European integration has been progressively stripped down to a core idea that the removal of national barriers to capital movement and economic activity will clear the path to dynamic renewal of the European economy. It would be fundamentally wrong to imagine that the dense networks of institutions and norms which, in the post-war Fordist boom years, regulated the national markets of Western Europe are about to be replaced by a similar EC structure organized from Brussels. The task of the EC institutions, once the final inter-governmental bargains have been struck, will be to ensure that nothing stands in the way of the consolidation of giant trans-European blocs of capital operating within the broad internal market—and, above all, to ensure that the labour movement is not free to exert effective pressure on its national government or on EC institutions to block the multifarious corporate strategies for breaking down and flexibly circumventing positions of labour strength. Rather than coordinating a continental recovery, 1992 is likely to involve a competitive frenzy of cost-cutting, mergers and rationalization, with a redivision of major sectors of the economy but no significant upturn in overall productive investment.

It is a very uncertain future indeed—one in which the 'depoliticization' of economics and the growing 'economization' of culture, health, education (even perhaps prisons) would leave Europe prey to a riot of capital flows, with the ever-present possibility of full-scale crisis caused by a lack of macro-economic coherence. The terms on

which American and Japanese capital will be allowed to participate in this bacchanal remain largely undecided, and the subject, no doubt, of considerable contention. The temptation is strong to form alliances with overseas capital in order to break down the significant obstacles which, particularly in continental Europe, stand in the way of the most ambitious neo-liberal projects. But fall-back positions already exist to obstruct the passage of American or Japanese capital, and 1992 might also be seen as a preparation against the eventuality of a ferocious outbreak of inter-capitalist rivalry. Whatever the precise international configuration, it would be a tragic end to the cosmopolitan Enlightenment ideal, such a Europe 'united' behind the backs of its population by rapacious private interests.

Weaknesses of the Left, Crisis of the Right

The onset of the seventies crisis of capital accumulation appeared at the time to coincide with a dramatic resurgence of the Left in Europe. The powerful miners' strikes in Britain had broken the back of the Heath government and offered a new chance for the labour movement; the PCI was winning new layers of support and seriously threatening Christian Democrat hegemony; the newly formed Union de la Gauche in France was steadily advancing to power with a programme containing many radical elements; a Left proclaiming an anti-capitalist identity seemed about to succeed the dictatorships in Southern Europe. In retrospect, however, it is clear that the evolution of social democracy since 1945 had not equipped it to withstand the turn to neo-liberalism by sections of international capital. The post-war growth model, though managed by conservative bourgeois governments in most countries of Western Europe, was supported in all its essentials by the social-democratic parties which actively participated in its creation. Bad Godesberg, by replacing class struggle with notions of social partnership, tied the very programme of the SPD to an expectation that employer-worker-government collaboration would pacify the contradictions of the capitalist market and allow an era of indefinite progress.

It is true that not every country quite had its Bad Godesberg, and that other traditions survived through the post-war years to surface briefly and unexpectedly in, for example, the original Meidner wage-earner-funds proposals in Sweden in the mid seventies. But the fact remains that the principal social-democratic leaderships of Western Europe could conceive of no other way of utilizing the accumulated strength of labour than to attempt to renew the settlement with big capital on a purely national basis. When the ideological reorientation of capital became apparent in the crisis of the mid-to-late seventies, only an immediate and similarly sharp reorientation by the Left towards greater state intervention and investment control could have stemmed the drift to monetarism and increasing unemployment. Instead the two major parties then in government in the EC—Labour and the SPD—simply hung on for a few more years as the fiscal crisis broke and jobless figures rose, eventually retreating in disarray before the resurgent Right while sectors of their own base, disaffected with austerity, crumbled away. Perhaps the worst failure of social democr-

in the post-war 'golden age'—its utter lack of any internationalist perspective for the labour movement—was now shown to have catastrophic results. When the French Socialist government attempted unsuccessfully to break out of the neo-liberal straitjacket in 1981 and 1982, it occurred to no one that a vigorous public appeal to the SPD could prevail against the conservatism of the Bundesbank and the Schmidt government.

Throughout the eighties we have been living with the consequences of that historic failure. Margaret Thatcher's rallying cry 'There Is No Alternative', too often echoed by social-democratic governments in power in the eighties, was in effect a mocking challenge to the leaders of the labour movement to come up with something different from a Keynesian consensus in which the dominant fractions of capital were no longer interested. Today, with 1992 on the horizon, the challenge is all the more forceful, the stakes all the higher. It is, to say the least, premature to bid farewell to the organized labour movement or even the industrial working class, as some now seem ready to do. But we should be aware of some of the lessons of third-term Thatcherism in Britain, whose stated objective is to eradicate 'socialism'. Socialism here refers to all the institutions that cut across the spontaneity of the market—for example, effective municipal administration, which is being denied the revenue or the revenue-raising powers to provide traditional social services, and in the great Labour cities has even been denied the right to exist as a democratically elected structure. These are institutions, together with centrally organized trade unions, which have historically formed the basis of the Labour Party's presence as a national political force; and the final aim of the Thatcher government is precisely to turn Labour into a disembodied party, perhaps fused with a new Liberalism, that lacks any social underpinnings for a coherent political alternative.

Evidently the traditions of Christian Democracy make such a course harder to contemplate in, say, Germany or Italy. However, there are many signs that these are now coming under increasing pressure, as previous formulae of political rule prove unable to integrate trends within the economy and the uncertain erosion of Cold War structures. Early in 1989 there is scarcely a single West European country where the major post-war formations of the bourgeoisie can look forward with any confidence to the next elections. We should not forget that Thatcherism itself marked a radical break from the recent traditions of the British Tory Party. Moreover, the strength of its attack on social democracy and the welfare state does not principally derive from its capacity to manipulate populist imagery—after all, it is only the undemocratic peculiarities of the British electoral system which mean that a party like the Tories can win a 100-seat majority in Parliament with only 43 per cent of the popular vote. Rather, its strength comes from its conscious and ruthless articulation of the ideology and material interests of the neo-liberal International, in a country where money capital has always enjoyed a privileged position vis-à-vis manufacturing—and, of course, from the enormous, uncontrolled powers of the Executive within the British State. Who can say that the neo-liberal agenda of 1992 does not pose a threat also to the organized labour movements of continental Europe?

Is There an Alternative?

In considering an alternative to 1992, it has become ever more necessary for the Left to start from an international framework of political action. The experience of the French Socialist government after 1981, as well as the rethinking in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have dramatically confirmed that it is neither possible nor desirable to withdraw from the immensely complex and productive international division of labour. This is not to say that that division of labour does not itself need to be recast, particularly but not only in regard to the Third World. But the European Left should in principle welcome the idea of a genuine integration of the economic and cultural resources of a continent whose fragmentation has underlain two world wars in this century. Indeed, one of the main accusations to be made against the 1992 programme is that its 'privatized' corporate-bureaucratic internationalism will actually heighten economic disparities and dislocative tendencies within the EC, producing instead an anomic mass of fragments of national communities.

Thus, while the Left in each country should naturally exploit every opportunity to strengthen its political and cultural positions, the answer to the neo-liberal challenge must be at the international level at which it is increasingly posed. At the heart of such an alternative has to be a programme for pan-European recovery of the productive economy that will restore something approaching full employment—a recovery, it should at once be stressed, which is intended not to establish a new Fortress Europe but to offer a model of balanced growth and cooperation to the peoples of the world. What is to be the pivot of this alternative? It may seem strange to start with this question, but in a sense it is the key to everything. To work out even the outlines of an alternative economic policy is a collective labour requiring the concentration of the most varied efforts. But even that would be a utopian enterprise unless there is some rational basis for believing that the mass labour movements of Europe provide the social ground for an alternative strategy.

A considerable layer of intellectuals in Western Europe, often confusing their own restlessness or disappointments with tendencies in the real social world, have all but written off the mass labour movements as a vehicle of change, or even as a social force with any chances of survival. Sometimes this rapidly leads to a straightforward abandonment of any progressive vision; at others it involves a quite inflated conception of the capacities of the new social movements. Without doubt the appearance of movements centred on issues of women's emancipation and environmental protection has expanded the horizons of the Left in an overwhelmingly positive direction, and a renewal of the programme of the socialist Left is inconceivable without this new awareness. But in the end it does come down to a renewal of that universal programme of emancipation. Not only do the new movements lack the social weight or relative homogeneity of organized labour, and therefore the capacity to assume the direction of society as a whole. Unless they enter the terrain of national and international political struggle—which implies an orientation toward

labour-based socialist movement—it is hard to see how their spontaneous ideologies can stably raise them above the level of marginal sub-cultures, in some cases forming part of the crisis of capitalist civilization rather than offering a coherent way out.

In order to weigh the future of the labour movement, we have to distinguish carefully between the subjective and the objective, as well as between the conjunctural and the epochal. A decade of neo-liberal attacks has undoubtedly undermined the cohesion and membership of organized labour in Europe. Unemployment has struck particularly hard at young workers, who form the natural well-spring of class militancy and vigour, and the weaknesses of the Left parties themselves—including the major Communist parties—have contributed to a certain disenchantment or turning away from politics among young people. Generational renewal of trade-union and party cadres has become a problem for nearly every party and group of the Left. Nevertheless, at the level of electoral support, the statistics simply do not bear out the gloomy prognoses of a collapse of the Left. Beginning with Belgium in 1987, the combined support of the Communist and Socialist parties (plus the Greens in, at least, West Germany) has been returning to roughly the level of the early-to-mid seventies—sharply down only in Britain, remarkably solid in Sweden. This is, to be sure, no reason for complacency: in particular, those social-democratic parties which have failed in their austerity government risk experiencing a wave of popular rejection. But it does suggest that the underlying attachment to the historical parties of the Left remains a central feature of European politics. Similarly, although the trade unions have suffered more than the parties, the strikes of the last year in France, Greece, Italy and, above all, Spain demonstrate the continuing possibility and potential of mass working-class action, particularly when, as in Spain, it both overcomes organizational divisions and addresses the concerns of society as a whole.

This, then, is still the bedrock for a renewal of the Left in Europe, although it should not be confused with that renewal itself. At a subjective level, the problem remains that the dominant traditions of the mass social-democratic parties, consolidated during the Keynesian boom years, can only envisage a strategy of bargaining and consensus with big capital. This was an available—and, in narrow terms, productive—orientation in the 1950s and 1960s. What happens, however, when big capital turns its back on class compromise and embraces the kind of neo-liberal agenda we have been discussing? There seem to be only two options, apart from a feverish and ultimately vacuous imagination of 'new times'. The first is to swim along with the current, even implementing major parts of the neo-liberal agenda in the hope of retaining the confidence of big capital that a subordinate social democracy can be relied upon in any future swing back to consensus politics. There is no sign that such a course will even have this effect: in the present period, crisis and division in the bourgeois Right may mean that social-democratic ministers briefly serve as valued interlocutors of bankers and multinational corporations, but it is only a matter of time before a more stable set of alliances is re-formed. Nor does there seem to be any possibility of combining neo-liberalism with

substantive social reforms—as the extremely modest Delors proposals illustrate at an EC level. Again, without drawing simplistic parallels, it should be remembered that pendulum imagery had disastrous consequences in the 1930s. International capitalism has never operated with the regularity of clockwork.

The second option, put at its simplest, is to campaign for and mobilize popular support for a programme that systematically basis itself on the need for recovery of the European productive economy. The difference is that whereas the first option conceives of politics as an adaptation to the will of autonomous economic 'entrepreneurs', the second approach seeks to use politics as a means of mobilizing the productive resources and social potential held back by the existing system of economic relations. This approach, we might say, corresponds to part of the original meaning of 'social democracy'—that is, the assertion of the principle of democracy not just at the level of politics and the institutional structures of society but also in the organization of its major economic activities. It does not, by itself, imply an a priori distribution between planning and market mechanisms, for example, or between different forms of ownership. It does imply that these matters, like the principal orientations of the economy, are the proper and legitimate province of democratic decision, equipped with varied means of social enforcement.

They are also highly serious matters, and there is no point in underestimating either the scale of the break with post-war social-democratic traditions or the intensity of the political struggle with neo-liberal forces that would be involved. But, on the other hand, not only do the mass labour movements and parties remain a powerful basis of support in every West European country; the post-war welfare state, with its associations of open-ended public responsibility, has retained an overwhelming popular allegiance throughout the continent. At a recent Young Conservative conference in Britain, one speaker described 'socialism' (i.e., in this context, welfare-state principles) as a 'filthy perversion' to be extirpated root and branch, while another denounced 'the Marxian view that education is a right' rather than a commodity to be bought and sold like anything else. This indicates the kind of vandal impetus which, at least in Britain, fuels the neo-liberal project. But the very violence of the language also displays the gulf between that project and popular mentalities. (Even in 'Thatcherite Britain' opinion polls have consistently recorded a majority of 70–80 per cent, including a sizeable proportion of Conservative voters, who disagree with various aspects of Thatcherite policy on health, education, etc.) It may well be, then, that if the Left were boldly to advocate an extension of the principle of direct public responsibility to the economy as a whole, it would find an immediate link to elements of already existing consciousness—not least because such an extension may prove to be the only effective way of defending the limited gains of the old welfare state.

Europe as a Social Space: From the Atlantic to the Urals

It should be stressed once again that none of the critical problems facing the continent can be tackled and solved except at the level of the continent as a whole, and certainly not within the self-definition of

'Europe' proposed in the 1992 programme. The reform process in Eastern Europe poses a basic choice for the Left. On the one hand, it could join with those capitalist forces which are probing to find a way for 'the West' to take advantage of events in the East, perhaps by picking off one or two Comecon countries and drawing them into the neo-liberal momentum of 1992. In this case Europe—or rather its NATO half—would remain one pole of an Atlantic order essentially defining itself in opposition to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Western Left could grasp the opportunity for close collaboration with reform forces in the East to define a joint programme for social and political advance. Europe might then become a genuinely united continent capable both of overcoming its own crisis and of helping to reshape world economy and politics. This is a real and urgent choice, and those who say 'Let's wait and see what happens to Gorbachev' are in their own way contributing to the dead weight of post-war conservatism in both West and East.

Within this pan-European framework, I would like to end by proposing a few elements of a new agenda for the Left, not by any means in a spirit of comprehensiveness—I have, for example, omitted any discussion of institutional frameworks—but simply to concretize some of the earlier points. There seem to me to be at least five broad areas for consideration: economic recovery; environmental protection; planned social advance; social rights; defensive security. It goes without saying that any genuine proposals for the equalization of workers' and other social rights throughout the EC, based on the principle of generalizing 'best practice', should be welcomed and supported by labour and socialist organizations. But the EC 'social space', as I understand it, has been whittled down to norms on workplace safety, together with vague evocations of 'worker participation' which would have no legally binding force and would anyway be so algebraic as to admit of any but the wildest system of managerial practice. The common sense in Brussels, and in the major board-rooms of Western Europe, seems to be that the social space is necessary to 'sell' the 1992 idea to the general population, but that it in no way represents an obstacle to the freeing of markets and the further erosion of the positions of organized labour. No doubt it would be possible to work out more extensive measures, but it should be clear by now that they could only be inserted into a programme that goes far beyond, or is largely opposed to, the aims of the European Commission let alone the major national forces participating in the definition of post-1992 Europe. What, then, are the elements of such a programme?

(1) *Public control and direction of capital flows.* In the wake of neo-liberalism, the precondition for a programme of economic recovery is control over the uses of capital and credit within the new economic space and its relations with the broader international economy. This would allow the public authorities to define and implement long-range investment priorities, in accordance with criteria of social usefulness, growth coherence, environmental protection and economic efficiency. It would also involve the power to approve or disapprove the closure of enterprises in accordance with the same criteria.

(2) *Massive public investment in new technologies and their industrial application.* The rapidly developing micro-electronic and other new technologies

offer the prospect of a huge leap in the average productivity of labour and thus in the productive resources available to society as a whole. Yet the research effort in this field remains largely dissipated among individual corporations, whose development and application of technology are tied to market-defined investment projects and all the vagaries of monopolistic competition. The centralization of research in a publicly funded network of pan-European institutes would concentrate these efforts and make it possible to steer their output into socially defined investment priorities.

(3) *Legislation for the Right to Work.* A statutory right to work at a guaranteed minimum wage throughout the new European space would be the clearest demonstration that each individual's contribution to collective economic life is no longer contingent on market forces but is a direct responsibility of the public authorities of the community. It would also provide a guarantee that the benefits of labour-saving technology are enjoyed equally, or in proportion to defined effort, by all the members of the labour force.

(4) *Steady and planned reduction of the working week.* In the neo-liberal economy, technological development constantly threatens the economic security of a large mass of wage-earners. Once it is placed under the direction of public authorities, however, it becomes possible to translate the rising productivity of labour in separate branches into an average reduction of the socially necessary working week throughout the European economy. The fact that no one precisely knows the present scope for industrial robotization, for example, is an indication of how privatized and fragmented the research effort still remains. But some estimates suggest as a serious possibility that the working week could immediately be reduced well beyond the 35 hours presently demanded by major trade unions. A central aim of Left politics in Europe should be to ensure a steady shrinking of the realm of necessity and a corresponding expansion and enrichment of the realm of culture and freedom beyond the workplace.

(5) *An international programme for defence of the environment.* Chernobyl, the greenhouse effect, the ozone crisis are just three dramatic illustrations of the need for global planning to protect the elementary conditions of social reproduction. The Green movements of the seventies and eighties have played a crucial role in challenging the destructive secrecy of both market and bureaucratic regulation, but the Left as a whole cannot delay any longer the task of integrating this new awareness into a more general social programme. Anti-industrialism is neither a necessary nor a desirable basis for this renewal. Already today, after years of procrastination, a large number of replacement products and technologies could be immediately introduced to tackle the most urgent threats to the environment. An international plan, involving both a system of protective norms and a massive prioritization and coordination of eco-R & D at both European and broader levels, would make it possible to envisage non-destructive economic recovery in the industrialized countries and major industrialization programmes elsewhere in the world.

(6) *Liberty, equality and solidarity for all residents of Europe.* Just as the

nation-state has become a barrier to social and economic advance within the geographic space of Europe, so have the nineteenth-century or earlier identities of European citizens become a factor of often quite explosive division within most of the major European countries. Economic growth in post-war Atlantic Europe was to a considerable extent based on the labour of workers originating from the Mediterranean basin, the West Indies or other parts of the world—most of whom were consciously 'deregulated' from the beginning within the societies in which they lived and worked. The building of a new, unified Europe, open to the world, requires the fullest integration of these workers at every level of society. This is not only a question of elementary democracy but also a vital issue for the future of the Left. While large pools of unprotected labour continually fuel economic neo-liberalism, racism has become a major weapon of those forces on the right seeking to break up the very notion of a unified social space.

(7) *A pan-European system of collective security.* The recent experience of cold war and militarist revival has already convinced large sections of the European population that, whatever the conjuncture in international relations, the antagonistic division of the continent structurally maintains the danger of war. Within a framework of genuine commitment to pan-European unity, it would be a simple matter to translate this popular pacifism into a grounding treaty renouncing the use of force in the affairs of the continent. This would imply at least the removal of any foreign military presence from the territories of the existing states, the dismantling of all European-controlled nuclear weapons systems threatening parts of the continent, and the retention only of minimal and unambivalent defensive systems that would themselves decline as confidence in European integration increased.

At the most general level, what is at stake now is the destiny of the three-hundred-year tradition of the Enlightenment. On the one hand, Thatcher declares that 'there is no society, only individuals and their families', and neo-liberal ideologues talk of unchaining the energies of the individual from the state as if there were no difference in kind between the concrete energies and potential of an unemployed worker in the Ruhr or Merseyside and those of the corporate-minded individuals who are preparing to unchain vast agglomerations of capital across the European continent. On the other hand, once-radical 'post-modern' intellectuals are engaging in a bonfire of the conceptual tools which men and women have used to grasp the contradictory universality and continuity of human experience: no more Society, no more History, no more Class, no more Subject, no more Truth; the litany goes on until it ends in a play of surfaces or a jumble of meaningless fragments. The Left has an enormous responsibility to enter the ideological and cultural battle which is taking place over the relationship between individual and collective identity, and which is literally shaping the way in which individuals live their social being. For in the end the most 'post-modern' individual does remain a social being, and we can be sure that 'beyond good and evil', beyond the destruction of the Enlightenment tradition, he will emerge again from Baudrillard's desert and slouch onto the historical arena in fearsome and as yet unpredictable forms. The main responsibility of the Left in this

respect, however, is to develop a political-economic programme which allows the full realization of individual capacities in a harmonious relationship with collective life. In the past, as Marx pointed out nearly a century and a half ago, human species development took place, could only take place, at the cost of the majority of human individuals. Today, incomparably more than in Marx's time, this is no longer true. The productive potential available on a world scale, constantly enhanced by new technologies, has turned the all-round development of all into a realizable goal, and the 'two-thirds society' of neo-liberalism into an artificial form that corresponds to requirements not of economic efficiency but of big capital domination over the lives of individuals and classes.

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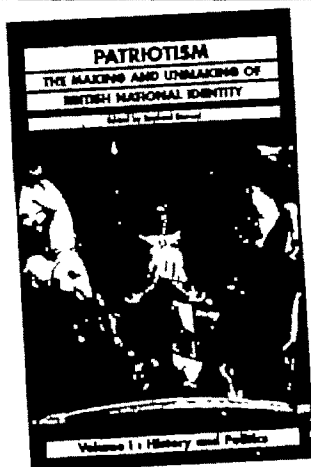
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Gender and the Rise and Fall of Class Politics

Is gender an autonomous form of social stratification? Does it form a compound with other bases of social inequality? How is it related to class, the 'master' concept of stratification theory? These questions have been forced into focus in recent years through the emergence of the married yet occupationally committed female wage-earner. In most advanced industrial societies, the rates of both participation and remuneration of married women stand at around sixty per cent of the male rates.¹ The implications for stratification theory and research are clear. The distribution of material inequality in the population can no longer be simply equated with wage differentials in the male workforce. The constitution of a household, the number of earners and non-earners, is now an equally important source of inequality, with the emergence of the DINK household (double income, no kids) opening up a further novel complication for surveyors of the economic landscape. Even those remaining loyal to the public sphere of production as *the* terrain for measuring material exploitation must now cope with the fact that female

labour is systematically undervalued relative to male—which suggests the operation of something other than a straightforward economic logic differentiating the life chances of male and female workers. These facts have not been lost on the new wave of feminist researchers who have risen with, indeed been part of, the transformation of the post-war labour market. A broad-based sisterhood of radical, Marxist and sociological feminists has kept up a polemic against the conventional mainstream, and the initial heresy that gender must be reckoned a formidable source of structured social inequality is increasingly acknowledged. Indeed, many of the old school gain intellectual refreshment from the personal discovery of past errors of method and judgement.² Almost every issue of *Sociology* records a new deserter from the ranks of mainstream masculinist theory and practice in stratification research. Naturally those with most investment in the old paradigm have found it hardest to budge, which helps to explain why two of the most prominent sociologists in Britain, John Goldthorpe and David Lockwood, stand out for their vigorous, some might say stubborn, defence of old practices.

John Goldthorpe has repeatedly asserted the validity of traditional methodological practice: measuring the social class of households by the occupation of the male 'head'.³ Though the growing presence of married women in the post-war workforce cannot be disputed, Goldthorpe has consistently argued that female workers do not have the occupational commitment of men and that their contribution to household living standards makes no substantial difference to the distribution of potentialities for class action in the population. Meanwhile his former colleague Lockwood has even denied that gender constitutes a form of social or sociological stratification in any sense at all. He concludes that because conflicts of interest between male and female are not capable of macro-social/organized expression, they are an inappropriate object of sociological analysis.⁴ Though Goldthorpe and Lockwood defend very different aspects of conventional theory and method, there is a certain unity in their recalcitrance. For generations of post-war sociology undergraduates, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (1969), their study of Luton car workers, was the key to the study of British class structure and it continues to serve as a benchmark for the state of political consciousness in Britain in the mid-1960s.⁵ Their defence of the conventional paradigm is in effect a defence of the perfect case study of masculinist research on class.

¹ G. Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Britain*, London 1986, G. Sapiro, *Women in American Society*, Mayfield California 1986.

² By the mid-1980s, even the publicly-funded ESRC Stratification Workshop felt the time had come to devote its annual session to *Gender and Stratification*. The proceedings, in R. Crompton and J. Mann, *Gender and Stratification* (Polity 1986), provide a useful and sometimes provocative account of the degree of reformist progress in the sociology of stratification. Interestingly, Goldthorpe declined to take part in the workshop and later refused to allow his own thoughts on the subject (J. H. Goldthorpe, 'Women and Class Analysis: In Defense of the Conventional View', *Sociology* 17, 1983) to be republished with the papers presented there.

³ Goldthorpe, *op. cit.*

⁴ D. Lockwood, 'Women and Social Class', in Crompton and Mann, *op. cit.*

⁵ J. H. Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge 1969.

Gender and Politics

This article will examine the relevance of gender for processes of class formation in nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain, drawing critical insight from Goldthorpe and Lockwood's study of affluent workers and from Lockwood's disavowal of gender as an axis of social inequality. I will argue that traditional approaches to the conceptualization and measurement of class do not merely fail to value the post-war contribution of women's paid work to the material and cultural life of households; more seriously, they fail to notice that gender inequality is a core ingredient of class formation and consciousness. I shall suggest that: (i) masculinity is a critical though untheorized component of class; (ii) the social processes that create and sustain gender inequality have been a submerged though crucial foundation of class formation; (iii) recent shifts in the political allegiance of manual workers are a sign of subsidence in this foundation brought about by a convergence of gender (rather than class) interests; and (iv) the seeds of this now well-developed process of societal change were clearly visible to Goldthorpe, Lockwood and their collaborators in the Luton study, but they went unnoticed and untheorized because of their masculinist methodology.

My observations apply well beyond the work of Goldthorpe and Lockwood. The field of stratification theory and research is still dominated by men. It has been confined to the analysis of male experience and yet it has failed to notice that an important dimension of what is being observed is masculinity itself. In short, theories of social stratification have not observed the compound structure of social inequality. Lockwood rejects gender as a stratification variable because it lacks the autonomous capability of producing social protest which can disturb prevailing social arrangements. He implies that class possesses such autonomy. I will take issue with this assumption. The social force of class is not a pure and single-stranded material phenomenon but a blended compound which, in its heyday, depended for theoretical propulsion on normative as much as material constituents. As a backdrop to the development of these arguments, the article will begin with a summary of the influence of gender on the shape of the political landscape of post-war Britain.

The last three general elections in Britain have been won by the party of capital led by a woman. Thatcherism, a movement rooted in an unashamed glorification of the bourgeois values of individualism and self-sufficiency, has attracted a sizeable proportion of the skilled working class vote. Prior to 1987 there was a highly significant discrepancy between overall distribution of men's and women's votes between the parties. Thus between 1950 and 1983 there was no election in which women voted in larger numbers for Labour than for its rivals. Labour's successes between those dates stemmed from its ability to attract the votes of a majority of males. Put another way, had Labour succeeded in attracting women's votes as successfully as it attracted male votes then it would have been Gaitskell not Macmillan who would have presided over postwar 'affluence', and it would have been Callaghan and not Thatcher who would have profited from the

legacy of North Sea oil. In the 1987 election the 'gender gap' appears to close if we look only at the overall distribution of votes, but significant differentials remain if the figures are broken down by age, according to the *Sunday Times* of 14 June 1987. Thus while 42 per cent of young men aged 18-24 voted Conservative only 31 per cent of young women did so; on the other hand while 42 per cent of men aged 35-54 voted Conservative, 47 per cent of women of this age group did so, the 5 per cent gap being the more significant because of the large size of this cohort.

Given the electoral power of women it is quite surprising that political scientists have paid so little attention to women's political inclinations and motivations. Psophological texts typically note the rightist voting tendencies of women, but then lose interest in pursuing the matter further. The political animal, as Lipset put it, is a man, and most surveyors of the political scene have restricted their interest to the voting intentions of the autonomous male without inquiring into his possible role as an agent of political socialization within the family. Consequently we have no systematic evidence on differences in voting behaviour between husbands and wives and no records of patterns of conjugal deviance for post-war elections.

Table One: Gender Breakdown of Voting Behaviour: 1945-1987

	Conservative		Labour	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1945	36.5	43.5	55.0	46.5
1950	41.0	44.5	47.0	43.5
1951	47.0	50.0	50.0	46.0
1955	46.5	55.0	51.0	42.5
1959	45.5	51.0	47.5	43.0
1964	40.0	45.5	49.5	39.5
1966	36.5	46.0	56.0	45.0
1970	42.0	50.0	47.0	40.0
1974	38.0	39.0	39.0	37.0
1979	45.0	45.0	40.0	36.0
1983	42.0	46.0	30.0	26.0
1987	43.0	43.0	32.0	32.0

Sources: For 1945-59, Perry Anderson, 'Problems of Socialist Strategy', in R. Blackburn and P. Anderson, eds., *Towards Socialism*, London 1965, pp. 276-7; for other years, MORI polls.

The part played by women in assuring the continuity of Conservative rule between 1951 and 1964 was the backdrop to the Luton study, yet Goldthorpe and Lockwood did not bother to inquire into past or future voting intentions, even just for the record, when they interviewed the wives of their male informants. Sections 7 and 8 of the Luton questionnaire, entitled 'Politics' and 'Class' respectively, come immediately after one on child socialization and before that which deals with savings and expenditure. While husband and wife are both designated as appropriate informants for these data, only the husband is listed as the person to answer questions about politics and class. Why did Goldthorpe and Lockwood deny their female informants the

opportunity to express their political feelings and ideas? Was it an oversight, an example of sloppy questionnaire design? This seems unlikely, given the preceding and succeeding sets of questions. Rather, it would have required an explicit instruction to the interviewer—which in turn implies some deliberation on the part of the principal investigators. The most plausible explanation is simply that Goldthorpe and Lockwood never conceived that it was necessary to gather data on female voting preferences. In their perspective the roots of class consciousness and action were buried in the public sphere of economic production, and though they conceptualized a domiciliary role for men—the male informant is referred to as ‘husband’—they clearly did not even begin to think about the implications of this title for political ideology and action. Given the evidence of table 1, and the significance that Goldthorpe and Lockwood assign to ‘processes of privatization’ in their conclusions, this was an extraordinary omission. Whether a more egalitarian-minded Britain (e.g. minus public schools and the House of Lords) might have emerged had Labour held onto power for the first two post-war decades is a matter of conjecture. What seems clear is that it was through women rather than men that the Conservative Party was handed the reins of governmental power and given a crucial opportunity to shape the development of the welfare state.

Deference, Domesticity and Deviance: The Political Ideology of Women

Why should working-class women vote for a right-wing political party? Working-class conservatives have been conceived as *deferential* voters, and this provides a ready explanation for women’s support of traditional authority figures. McKenzie and Silver even go so far as to posit a gender differential among working-class conservatives.⁶ While identifying a *secular*, i.e. pragmatic, motivation on the part of some, mostly male, working-class conservatives, they find that women outnumber men as deferential voters.

Political deferentialism is equated with a state of false consciousness, and according to Parkin, we should not be surprised if women fail to see where their true material interest lies.⁷ When they vote in opposition to their husbands, they are merely conforming to the cultural hegemony of Toryism in British social life. The vote for Labour represents the more deviant behaviour. The conservatism of women stems from domestic isolation and insulation from alternative sources of political socialization. Men, exposed to ideologies and institutions critical of the ruling elite, are much more likely to take a deviant electoral path. Parkin clearly does not rate the husband as a very effective agent of political socialization in domestic life. Though coming close to the topic of political ideology and the dynamics of conjugal life, he fails to speculate on how intimates who share the same living space

⁶ R. McKenzie and A. Silver, *Angels in Marble Working Class Conservatives in Urban England*, London 1968.

⁷ F. Parkin, ‘Working Class Conservatives: A Theory of Political Deviance’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 1967.

influence each other's ideology and action. Consequently the fact that some women reject the guidance of their 'better informed' spouses in the polling booth sparks no curiosity. Like others, he assumes that voting preferences are only formed in self-conscious fashion outside the home, in the public sphere of occupational life. His use of the term 'deviant' is also problematic. Though a critical minority of married working-class women have 'deviated' from the conjugal line in casting the vote, the majority did support the party of organized Labour at least before 1970. According to Parkin's argument, the statistical majority display the deviant behaviour, while the working-class wife who votes against the political choice of the male household head is the conformist. By his interpretation, female support for radical causes should increase in proportion to their presence in the labour market.

The trends of table 1 offer no support to this expectation. Increasing labour-force participation is associated with a steady decline in support for the Labour Party. Whatever shapes the political preferences of women, work experience does not seem to be a dominant force; the most recent survey evidence even suggests that the married non-employed housewife is marginally more likely to vote Labour than her working counterpart.⁸

Some feminist commentators have sought to reduce female support for right-wing parties to an artifact. Arguing that the sex differential in mortality produces an excess of females in elderly age groups, they suggest that the correlation between aging and political conservatism offers a ready excuse for the peculiarities of the female vote.⁹ This is convenient but scarcely credible. Even a cursory glance at table 1 reveals that gender differentials are too big to be merely an artifact. Before 1960, any demographic imbalance is offset by greater turnout among men and by the fact that the sex ratio in survival produces the largest female excess at ages where turnout is low because of the sheer difficulties of getting to the polling booth. Moreover, if gender differentials in voting were an artifact, how do we explain uneven fluctuations since 1950? The gender gap moves up and down in a way that is inconsistent with the systematic growth of excess male mortality in the twentieth century.¹⁰ The survival discrepancy is much greater today than it was two decades ago yet the voting differential is much smaller. Clearly the trends have real substance. They are not an artifact of female longevity.

In each of these analyses, the interpretation of female voting is confined by a masculinist inferential logic. The question to be addressed is: 'Why do working-class women reject the party which represents their true political interests?' Parkin caught a glimpse of the limitations of the perspective but he did not see the fundamental problem of socialist ideology and practice—its failure to articulate and give

⁸ D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1983*, New York 1984.

⁹ Cf. S. Walby, 'Gender Politics and Social Theory', *Sociology* Vol. 22 No. 2, 1988

¹⁰ N. Hart, 'Sex, Gender and Survival: Inequalities of Life Chances between European Men and Women', in J. Fox, ed., *Health Inequalities in Europe*, London 1988

political expression to the sources of oppression in women's lives. The problem is not merely women's spatial insulation from radical ideology; it is also a question of socialism's irrelevance, even antagonism, to women's situation, interests and needs. Did they have any reason to believe that the destruction of the CMP would lead to anything but an MCP dictatorship of the proletariat? New wine, but out of old bottles.

The Luton study is the obvious source for clues to answer this question. As noted, this was the major social investigation of class, ideology and politics in post-war Britain. Started in the early 1960s following Labour's third successive electoral defeat, it was an attempt to test the so-called *embourgeoisement* thesis: the argument that rising living standards were not only closing the material gap between manual and non-manual workers but also blurring cultural and ideological divisions. The researchers were interested in the electoral prospects of the Labour Party, and one might have hoped for systematic investigation of the class affiliation and political motivation of that group of working-class voters which had kept the conservatives in power. In fact, nowhere are the masculinist blinkers of mid-century macro-sociology in Britain better revealed than in the research design and theoretical conclusions of the Luton study.

Embourgeoisement and Privatization

The intellectual stimulus for the Luton study was the claim that the proletariat of the first capitalist nation was heading for extinction. This was a predicted outcome of the *logic of industrialism*, a new brand of economic reductionism which saw the future of advanced capitalism not as a process of increasing polarization, but as its opposite, the disappearance of class antagonisms and the convergence of classes as both material and cultural entities.¹¹ Convergence theory had its roots in American social science, but in Britain a number of social ethnographers had independently charted some of the predicted changes.

Foremost among them was Ferdynand Zweig. Formerly Professor of Political Economy in Cracow, Zweig came to Britain in 1940 and emerged as a roving anthropologist of working-class life. By the end of the 1940s his researches were published in a number of books including *Life, Labour and Poverty*, *Men in Pits*, *British Worker* and *Women's Lives and Labour*. Unlike his later critics, Zweig began from the premise of gender inequality. His analyses of working-class life are filled with acute commentary on the gap in resources, power, rationality and ideology between men and women and include a challenge to the accepted ideal type of the female deferential voter. Zweig found his female informants highly sensitized to the issue of class distinction. Questions about working-class membership roused hostility because they were seen as a source of personal devaluation. Among younger women, Zweig records strong aspirations for material self-improvement in the private sphere, aspirations he identified as the pursuit of middle-class living standards and lifestyles. In this context a woman's vote for the party of capital might be seen as a statement of personal ambition

¹¹ C Kerr et al, *Industrialism and Industrial Man*, Harmondsworth 1962

rather than an expression of contentment with her place in the social order. His book *The Worker in an Affluent Society* suggests that the desire to dissociate oneself from traditional symbols of working-class identification was flourishing among post-war generations of manual workers and their wives.² The working class, as he saw it, was destined to be absorbed into the expanding strata of middle-income if not middle-class people.

Convergency theory had few followers among European sociologists. Marxists, along with other conflict sociologists, pointed to the continuing concentration of property and income, or to the persistence of inequalities in education, occupational training and opportunities of mobility.³ Or they argued that the death of traditional working-class culture should not be seen as a backward step for the generation of revolutionary consciousness. For Perry Anderson, in 1965, the 'stupefied traditionalism' of working-class communities was an impediment to the generation of rational economic calculation. But if traditional working-class ways of life were yielding to a new rational materialism, the problem for left-wing political causes was how to convert this to collective rather than individual utilitarianism.⁴

Goldthorpe and Lockwood, seeing this as the crux of the problem for the Labour Party, selected Luton as the site for their investigation of the political behaviour and ideology of post-war generations. Its economy was dominated by new automobile plants paying high wages and attracting mobile manual workers from elsewhere in Britain. This made it an appropriate test case for study of the cutting edge of 'affluent workers' as a force to be reckoned with in the Labour movement. When the results were finally published in the late 1960s, Goldthorpe and Lockwood, now in the company of Bechhofer and Platt, concluded that while the embourgeoisement thesis was not an accurate portrayal of new developments, major changes were afoot in the British class structure. *Privatization* was the concept for these changes. The privatized worker was not a middle-class person, but he was also not unambiguously a working-class person. He was socially detached, oriented primarily to his private life and personally ambitious concerning his own material living standards and those of his family.

The Luton Study found no evidence of the alienation depicted by some contemporary Marxists.⁵ If the affluent worker was emerging as a 'One Dimensional Man', it did not seem to be the crushing outcome of a dehumanized work process. Equally the consumerist mentality of affluent workers was not a compensatory mechanism for the meaninglessness of work. On the contrary, a personal drive to improve living standards was the stimulus to take on better-paid

² F. Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society*, London 1961.

³ See J. Westergaard, 'The Withering Away of Class', in P. Anderson and R. Blackburn, eds., *Towards Socialism*, London 1965, and A. Little and J. Westergaard, 'The Trend of Class Differentials in Educational Opportunity in England and Wales', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1964.

⁴ P. Anderson, 'Problems of Socialist Strategy', in Anderson and Blackburn, op. cit.

⁵ H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, London 1964, and A. Gorz, *Overlords of Néocapitalisme*, Paris 1964.

though less satisfying work. According to the British researchers, the intellectual despondency of mid-century Marxist theory was a measure of the gap between the intellectual and the worker. Consumerism for the one represented a fetishization of unnecessary commodities, for the other an understandable desire for a decent, comfortable home and an improved standard of living. The political implication was that the allegiance of the materially aspirant affluent worker would depend on the skill of political leaders in formulating an ideology which could encompass their material ambitions within a radical package of societal reforms.

The debate about consumerism, alienation and the narrow economism of affluent workers was conducted among male theorists and about male workers. When Gorz equated alienation with 'the satisfaction of passive needs of consumption and domestic life', the unfettered sexism of the words did not even occur to him.¹⁶ The same tendency is displayed by Goldthorpe et al. in the suggestion that the future of the Labour Party will depend on its 'clearly and consistently demonstrating that it is the party of the *working man*'.¹⁷ In each case, the macro-sociologist/Marxist fails to glimpse the experience, the consciousness, even the existence of the working-class woman even though she had 'scotched' the Labour Party's chance to govern at three successive elections. If Goldthorpe et al. had not applied the masculinist blinkers, they would have seen that their own challenge to Gorz and others was a direct outcome of a new desire on the part of men to improve the traditional female zone of social life: the private sphere of existence.

Though embourgeoisement was conceived and studied as though it only involved men, the processes at stake in the debate would seem to be very much within the province of women. The concept used by Goldthorpe et al. to describe the situation of the affluent working-class male is a favourite among feminists. The private sphere is the domestic terrain. 'Privatization' depicts the community orientation of affluent workers, their insulation from the mainstream of traditional working-class lifestyle. However, the same term is invariably coupled with the unconceptualized words 'home- or family-centred'. The phenomenon of the affluent manual worker is the result of 'a shift away from a community-oriented social life towards recognition of the conjugal family and its fortunes as of overriding importance.' 'Our findings clearly show how a family-centred and privatized style of life was indeed the norm among the manual workers we studied, and how the economic advancement of their families was a matter of paramount importance to them.'¹⁸

How should the tendency towards 'home-centredness' be theorized? In what follows I want to explore privatization as an expression of the dynamics of gender inequality. I suggest that one concomitant of the diminution of class consciousness which accompanied the growing affluence of manual workers was a decline in gender inequality. The

¹⁶ Gorz, *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹⁷ Goldthorpe et al., *op. cit.*, p. 191.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

phenomenon of privatization was in large measure the result of a convergence not of classes but of genders. Though the authors never intended it, their conceptual choice was particularly suited to the narrowing gap between the interests of husbands and wives.

Class and Material Inequality within Households

One direct effect of privatization is greater equality within the conjugal household. When male workers spend their surplus income on their homes rather than themselves, the result is higher living standards for their families. This means that privatization leads to a reduction in gender inequality within the family. This is not theorized as a dimension of social stratification by Goldthorpe and his co-authors. Affluence is seen as the overriding cause of the process of privatization, but the observers do not comment on why surplus income should be channelled into the domestic sphere rather than being expended on more selfish and male-centred activities, as it most certainly was among their fathers and grandfathers.

The process of *privatization* uncovered in Luton represented a potential closing of the gap between two forms of poverty identified by Rowntree at the turn of the century.¹⁹ He distinguished *primary* poverty, affecting the entire household, from *secondary* poverty which might affect only certain members of it. In fact his distinction was between insufficiency of household income on the one hand, and sufficiency with wasteful expenditure on the other. Rowntree, among others, devoted considerable effort to the measurement of what would constitute an adequate level of subsistence.²⁰ Repeated surveys gave the lie to bourgeois accusations that poverty resulted from irrational budgeting on the part of working-class families, and they showed that even the most rational pattern of food expenditure by a low-income household could not produce 'efficiency' in its members. Bowley, for example, in a national study found between 13 and 16 per cent of households existing in a state of primary poverty and 27 per cent of children living in families which failed to reach the minimum standard for healthy existence.²¹ Even so, in 1899 Rowntree had identified 28 per cent of wage-earners in York living in secondary poverty due to 'wasteful expenditure'. What would count as wasteful expenditure in a household whose income was barely sufficient for basic subsistence? To answer this, we can draw on the insightful research of Zweig four decades later in *Women's Life and Labour*.

My previous inquiries concerned with the male shattered my idea of the 'economic man' I saw too often the irrationality of the behaviour of man, how he often wastes his money at the cost of the necessities of life in a way which mocks at every idea of calculus or rational conduct. And the male is supposed to be a rational creature who sets the standard of rational conduct! In a way this inquiry actually brought me back to the idea of 'economic man' Yes the 'economic man' exists, but he is a female So the

¹⁹ B S. Rowntree, *Poverty*, London 1922.

²⁰ See E. Cadbury et al., *Women's Work and Wages*, London 1907; and A L. Bowley and A. Burnett-Hurst, *Livinghood and Poverty*, London 1908.

²¹ Bowley, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

economists should speak about the economic woman, not the economic man. To the question: 'Do you believe in saving?' you will get from women practically 100% answer: 'of course', but not from men. Every penny is used with a plan and a forethought. While working automatically with their hands, women think about the food they are going to prepare and about their shopping, and what is the best way of spending and saving, and how to economize on this and that. They are the ones who are responsible for their families. A working man who deposits with his wife what is called housekeeping money can play with the rest as he pleases, and the wife does not often grudge him this privilege. But she is the captain of the ship and she must take care that the ship keeps floating on the stormy waters of life. There is probably a certain amount of waste in women's spending in the working class as well, but this is incomparably smaller than that in men's sphere. Even women who go out to work have to scrape and count their pennies very carefully, to considerable degree more than men. Go into the casual wards—or reception centres as they are now called—and you will find men vagrants displacing themselves continually, moving themselves from place to place, maladjusted to the very core of their existence, but you will find not one woman there. The mechanism of adjustment is much finer in women and works much more efficiently. Irrational behaviour is mostly the privilege of the rational sex. The irony of life in its full swing of contradictions can be seen nowhere better than in the sex differentials in workers' life.²²

Wasteful expenditure in working-class households lies in the personal expenditure of men. The female spends not for herself but for the whole household, and with her lies the responsibility to make ends meet. Only the male knows anything of the luxury of consumer choice. Almost every major social investigation of the living standards of working-class families in the century before 1950 documents obvious inequalities between adult male and female personal expenditure.

The husband-wife contract is therefore of key importance to the family standard of living. Of the wife's share of family income, the far greater part is spent on necessities, i.e. on things which the whole family consumes and uses, and which they cannot do without. The greater part of the earner's pocket money, on the other hand, is spent for the individual benefit of the earner on things which are not essential for subsistence. The wife must in many cases be hard put to it to extract any money for herself out of her allowance. She is in fact, the lowest paid, most exploited worker in the country, given a mere subsistence wage, with no limit on hours worked.²³

This pessimistic view of the state of material inequality between the sexes during the Second World War suggests little change in more than a century. In Harrison's apologetic analysis of working-class male drinking behaviour, we find a free acknowledgment that: 'Drinking places on pay day were besieged by wives desperately anxious to feed and clothe the family; many married couples fought over the contents of the wage packet and many wives were kept ignorant of its contents. The nineteenth-century drinking place, like the twentieth-century expense account, encouraged men to enjoy better

²² F. Zweig, *Women's Lives and Labour*, London 1951, p. 10.

²³ C. Madge, *Wartime Pattern of Saving and Spending*, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 1943, p. 32.

living standards than their wives. To make matters worse, drunken husbands were often stung by the wife's silent or open reproach into the wife-beating for which Englishmen were notorious abroad.²⁴

Earlier in this unselfconscious masculinist account of the role of alcohol in social relationships, Harrison records his observations on the pub as the working man's natural place of retreat and relaxation: 'The working man's home was often cold, uncomfortable and noisy; he and his wife lived at too close quarters and his drink expenditure probably increased with the size of his family. More important, his home had only begun to lose its machinery and was only beginning to acquire its comfortable furniture. It was only in the process of becoming a place of leisure rather than of toil, and was still oftener a place to fly FROM than to fly TO. Temperance reformers wanted working men to improve the home by spending their money there. But until consumer goods became more readily available—and until both the resources and the inclination necessary for a new style of living could be created—drinking was bound to remain a popular recreation.'²⁵

Drinking was a popular and costly male recreation increasing proportionately with the size of family.²⁶ Turn-of-the-century researchers give different estimates of average household expenditure on drink. In 1881 a British Association survey found that drink was the largest single item of expenditure (14 per cent compared with 11.4 per cent meat and 8.8 per cent bread). This was thought by its authors to be an underestimate, and indeed other researchers put the figure much higher.²⁷ Charles Booth believed that the average workman spent 25 per cent of his income on drink and Burnett has claimed it was nearer 33 per cent. Rowntree gave an estimate of 17 per cent and, as noted, calculated that this was enough to push 28 per cent of households into secondary poverty. The same authority calculated that the working-class family suffered a calorific loss of 17.6 per cent as a result of 'wasteful expenditure' on alcohol. Even if we take the lowest of these estimates as gospel, we can only conclude that recreational drinking by the breadwinner constituted a substantial drain on the material resources and living standards of working-class families in the pre-war era. While almost every household reserved some of its resources for tobacco and drink, Rowntree and others repeatedly observed that 'women and children suffer from underfeeding to a much greater extent than men. It is tacitly agreed that the man must have a certain minimum of food in order to perform the muscular work demanded of him, and the provision of this minimum in the case of families with

²⁴ B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872*, London 1971, pp. 46-7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁶ M. Young, 'Distribution of Income within the Family', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. III No. 4, 1952, p. 311.

²⁷ Self-reported evidence of alcohol consumption is by its very nature notoriously unreliable. As Hamish-Fraser observes, 'Just what proportion of an average working-class family's income was spent on drink is difficult to assess. Working men were not likely to expose themselves to the moral reproaches of middle-class investigators by admitting to excessive consumption of alcohol.' *The Coming of the Mass Market*, London 1981.

small incomes involves a degree of underfeeding of women and children greater than the figures we present.'²⁸

Material inequality within the household was not an independent topic of research. Though we come across fragmentary evidence of differential neglect of women and children within working-class households, political and social theorists never saw the need to theorize it as a form of material exploitation. Gender was a fact of nature not society and even Engels, who was unusually far-sighted for his time, made gender no more than a dependent adjunct of private property with no implications for class struggle. Where theory is silent, the empirical record is bare. We are forced with the historians to make plausible estimates on the basis of the clues that exist.

Gender Inequality: Property, Income and Consumption

The aim of this section is to summarize what is known about the extent of material inequality within marriage and the family in pre-war Britain. We may begin with some observations on civic stratification and gender. Sexual discrimination was a fact of matrimonial law during the century before 1950. The 'natural' rights of the husband virtually to own both the person and the property of his wife were safeguarded by law until well into the nineteenth century. Though a number of legislative reforms after 1850 helped liberate at least the middle-class wife from 'conjugal slavery', the continuing power of custom is shown by the fact that it was only in 1970 that British men lost the legal privilege of suing a wife's lover for damages for the loss of her unpaid 'services' consequent upon divorce. A woman's right to a fair share of corporate conjugal property was non-existent before 1950, and only in 1970 did women gain an automatic claim to the material assets accumulated during marriage. Before this she did not even own any money she managed to save from the housekeeping allowance. The legal framework for marriage and family life thus forms the normative and moral backdrop for conjugal negotiation over rights to property, income and consumption within households.

The husband's legally-enforced economic privileges were strengthened during the first industrial century by the emergence of the breadwinner ethic. The growing separation between home and work, between private and public spheres of existence, segregated the everyday experience of women and men, creating the illusion that only men were engaged in real work and the reality that the bulk of a family's livelihood was now channelled through the wage packet of the male household head. The housewife became the formal economic dependent of her husband. She was allocated some share of her husband's wages, but in what proportion neither she nor we could say with any certainty. The accepted convention was that women had no right to know what their husbands earned. Even by the mid-thirties, social investigators still believed that wives could not provide accurate

²⁸ Rowntree, *op cit.*, p. 309

information on household income: '... frequently a woman knows only what money her husband gives her, not how much he actually receives.'²⁹ To add insult to injury, Rowntree's survey interviewer was often better informed than the hapless housewife about her husband's earnings. This speaks volumes on the powerlessness of the housebound homemaker.

The same conclusion emerges from the widely acknowledged fact that self-reported family budgets gave a misleading picture of the volume of family income spent on alcohol and tobacco. Comparing expenditure reported in surveys with estimates of total national consumption, we find that housewives under-reported alcohol expenditure by 86 per cent and tobacco by 34 per cent.³⁰ This led researchers like Rowntree to rely on information supplied by employers and trade unions to estimate the extent of material deprivation, rather than use the housewife as an informant.

National expenditure on alcohol and tobacco, then, is one clue to the division of a household's financial resources between a breadwinner and the rest of his family. I have already noted various turn-of-the-century estimates. The Mass Observation Study, 'The Pub and the People', conducted on the eve of the Second World War, offers some guidance on the extent of drinking thirty years later. The government statistical abstract for 1936 put the per capita consumption of beer at 17.58 gallons. Allowing for the fact that 90 per cent of drinkers are over the age of 25 and that almost 90 per cent are male, the study estimates a per drinker consumption of about 50 gallons per annum or about one pint a day. This average naturally entails a great deal of variation. Tom Harrison, participant observer for Mass Observation, counted the number of pints drunk by each pub client from opening to closing time on a Thursday evening. '28 men between them put back 88 pints, an average of 3.16 pints per head.' (The median was between 2 and 3 pints) The estimate increased to 3.45 pints on a Saturday, and if account is taken of clients who drank at more than one pub on the same outing, it rises to 4.57 pints. These are estimates of the drinking behaviour of 'regulars'. As Harrison observes: "Their drinking is heavier than that of the occasional casual who drops in to "have one", but in averaging out, the casual's low consumption will be cancelled by the occasional booze-up on special occasions, such as the celebration of a long-priced winner.'³¹

Not all working-class men were pub-goers. Harrison estimates for the mid-1930s that some 15 per cent of men were teetotallers and beyond this there were undoubtedly a substantial number of men for whom the pub was not a major focus of recreation. The important question is what proportion of an average household budget went on drink and other predominantly male pleasures. Interestingly, many surveys of

²⁹ Rowntree, p. 25

³⁰ M. Young, *op cit*, p. 308

³¹ T. Harrison, *The Pub and the People*, Cresset Library 1987 (original edition London 1943), pp. 38-39

³² *Ibid*, p. 41

household expenditure do not mention drink, though tobacco is usually included. This is despite the fact that even as late as 1937, national statistics found that alcohol came third on the nation's consumption bill after food, and exceeded the aggregate total for furniture, coal and footwear.³² Putting all the available evidence together, we can say that the most likely estimate of the share of household resources going to drink was about 15 per cent during the mid-1930s.

In earlier decades the percentage would have undoubtedly been much higher. At the close of the nineteenth century, Hamish-Frazer estimates that 'each male drinker was consuming 73 gallons of beer, 2.4 gallons of spirits and just under one gallon of wine per annum.' He continues: 'The pub offered warmth, company and an escape from overcrowded and desolate homes. Indeed it could be argued, as did the habitués of the pub in Lark Rise, that evenings in the taproom were indeed a saving, "for with no man in the house, the fire at home could be let die down and the rest of the family could go to bed when the room got cold"'.³³

In 'Worktown' (Bolton), the site of the Mass Observation Study, Harrison calculates a ratio of one pub per 170 inhabitants in 1848, compared with 559 in 1938.³⁴ Nostalgically he concludes that the decline of the pub symbolizes the negative trend of modern culture. New commercially-oriented institutions (cinemas, football pools, press, motor culture, radio, and, to a surprising degree, dance halls) were gaining in significance at the expense of older spontaneous forms (churches, pubs, political parties) whose *raison d'être* was the 'making of a social group'. He paints a picture of the pub as a cosy communitarian institution dependent for its survival on the 'participation of people in groups which are in active verbal and physical proximity to one another'. Its disappearance heralds the end (smashing) of the 'mill-home-district relationship'.³⁵

What Harrison overlooks in an otherwise fine ethnography are the oppressive dimensions for women of traditional working-class life. His list of old style communitarian institutions excludes one that was certainly commercially-oriented and has been called by one authority 'The Housewife's Saviour'.³⁶ I refer of course to the pawn shop. Johnson estimates a ratio of one pawn shop for every 3500 people in large British towns in 1914 and he quotes another estimate of one pledge per family for every two or three weeks in 1902.³⁷ Though the pawnbroker

³² F. Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Oxford 1945, p. 53.

³³ P. Joyce, in *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (Harvester 1980), gives even higher estimates for Blackburn and offers other interesting observations on the contribution of drink to political life. 'The Conservative Party's electoral success owed much to its involvement with the drink trade. In 1862, there were 460 drink outlets in Blackburn, reputedly one for every 23 houses and 17 for every one clergyman, place of worship or public school. The pub and the beer-house were not merely drink shops, they were also the primary focus of a great deal of working-class institutional life' (p. 292).

³⁴ T. Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁵ M. Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet. Pawnbroking and Working Class Credit*, London 1983.

³⁷ P. Johnson, 'Credit and Thrift in the British Working Class', in Winter, ed., *The Working Class in Modern British History*, Cambridge 1983, p. 154.

charged very high rates of interest (100 per cent on pledges redeemed within the week), his reputation within working-class neighbourhoods was benign, the term 'Uncle' indicating his image as a 'familiar and friendly standby in times of need'. Obtaining ready cash at the pawnshop was frequently (fortnightly) the only way a housewife could cope with the endemic cash-flow problems of working-class life, and, as Tebbutt shows, most of the pawnshop's clients were women not men. Here then is one old-style institution, a submerged and morally dubious, though vital, foundation of the material structure of working-class life, which can hardly be classified among those which create and sustain a social group in 'physical and verbal proximity'. Resort to the pawnshop, however frequent, was not an event to be heralded. It was one to be conducted with utmost discretion, which was why pawnbrokers wisely located their premises so as to provide their predominantly female clientele with some degree of privacy.

'Making ends meet' was a continuous struggle for a large number, perhaps the majority, of working-class housewives whose families made up eighty per cent of the population at the turn of the century. No food on the table or no coal in the hearth was often a harsh daily prospect from which the public house provided a refuge for husband but not wife. Recreational inequality could even be presented as a household economy: when the breadwinner's away the home need not even be heated.

What sort of mentality would not see the injustice in this double standard? We are told that some paternal privileges were freely accepted as a legitimate fact of life. That men should expect and receive a better diet than their wives and children is one of these. But where do we draw the line between a fair and an unfair gendered division of household resources? When social investigators report that men are protected from the knowledge of their wives' starving in order to give them a higher standard of living, who is being fooled? The signs of malnutrition, immediately obvious to the outsider, go unnoticed by the intended vanguard of proletarian revolt, but do they go unnoticed by the victim herself? We should bear in mind that women's fatalism about their own and their children's health must have been changing around the turn of the century. The nutritional status of the population was improving, child and infant mortality rates were declining, and working-class women were beginning to glimpse the possibility that control of procreation might be one strategy for improving the living standards and prospects of their families. Alongside these developments come the enforcement of compulsory schooling for children and the loss to the housewife of their contribution to the family purse. How did these changes affect a woman's view of breadwinner privileges, especially when she understood the fact, pressed home by Temperance reformers, that a substantial proportion of the family's livelihood was being drained away at the local? Historians of class have accepted too easily the image of the unthinking, unfeeling, non-judgemental housewife. An exception is McKinnon, who attributes the lack of real socialist sentiment in traditional working-class communities to the sexual division of labour and leisure, suggesting that antagonistic divisions between men and women in leisure and

consumption stifled the growth of the kind of communitarian feeling with which Harrison invests his account of the 'mill-home-district relationship'.³⁸

Despite the falling popularity of public houses before and after the Second World War, expenditure on alcohol and cigarettes continued to be a source of division between husbands and wives. Young concludes that expenditure on alcohol and tobacco rose 400 per cent between 1938 and 1951, a period in which average wages rose by just over 200 per cent. The increased expenditure, which must indicate a widening gap in the division of household income between breadwinner pocket money and housekeeping expenses, was largely the result of increased taxation. Taxation policy treated these goods as luxuries, while their predominantly male consumers continued to regard them as necessities. Given the importance assigned to these 'socially legitimate narcotics' as causes of the widening sex differential in mortality, there can be no doubt of their significance as items of male expenditure.³⁹

The British Treasury made ingenious use of the fact that housewives were kept in the dark about their husband's expenditure on alcohol and tobacco. The retail price index, to which wage demands were tied, was based upon the income and expenditure reports of housewives. It left out of account the bulk of expenditure on alcohol and tobacco. Thus these goods went unrecorded in the key inflation index, which was heavily weighted towards subsidized household necessities. The overall result, ironically, was a redistribution of family income from husbands to wives engineered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who simultaneously ploughed back the tax revenue collected from men into food subsidies and public services. The policy was part of a deliberate design to discourage high wage demands on the part of manual workers. If stratification theorists remained ignorant of conjugal inequality, Treasury officials did not.⁴⁰

The share of family income retained by the male breadwinner probably varied both between regions and between households in the same region. Zweig reports that the practice of men handing over the whole wage packet and receiving back some portion as pocket money was common in Lancashire and uncommon in London. 'The Cockneys are not as stupid as the Cloggies are!'⁴¹ He attributes the 'matriarchal strain' in Northern households to the economic independence of

³⁸ R. McKinnon, 'Why There Was No Marxism in Great Britain', *English Historical Review* 99, 1984.

³⁹ Cf. S. Preston, *Older Male Mortality and Cigarette Smoking: A Demographic Analysis*, Berkeley 1987; R.D. Retherford, *The Changing Sex Differential in Mortality*, 1976; and N. Hart, 'Sex, Gender and Survival: Inequalities of Life Chances between European Men and Women', in Fox, ed., *Health Inequalities in Europe*, London 1988.

⁴⁰ Even today it is estimated that one third of the cost of the NHS is paid for by tobacco revenue. Today the redistributive effect of this tax is much less given the increasing consumption of women in recent years. Tobacco revenue is now one of the most regressive forms of taxation because the decrease in consumption has been most marked among professional and non-manual workers.

⁴¹ F. Zweig, *British Worker*, London 1952, p. 49.

women and to the fact that married female weavers and spinners were often the sole supporters of their families during economic recessions. In the same vein he finds that the working wife was better placed than her housebound sister to demand the full contents of her husband's wage. 'A woman staying at home has a certain sense of inferiority, believing that she is kept by the husband who is the master; more frequently you will get from her the characteristic answer: "A man would not be a man if he gave you his whole wage packet"'.⁴²

Masculinity, money and female dependency are interwoven in this 'characteristic' answer. The fact of being the breadwinner in the eyes of the outside world was apparently not enough to buttress masculine pride. Men needed a more concrete expression of their status in the household ('master') and this came in the way the wage packet was handled and in the norm of female submissiveness.⁴³ When family allowances were first considered as a tool of government policy to reduce poverty, Labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald opposed direct payment to wives on the grounds that it would undermine the pride and dignity of the male breadwinner. Echoes of the same sentiments were heard more recently when tax credits were proposed as an alternative to child benefit.

However, we should not underestimate financial incentives in male attempts to control both information and access to the contents of the wage or salary. In the late nineteenth century, increased national expenditure on alcohol and tobacco has been interpreted as a sign of rising real income for the average working-class household. Dingle argues that surplus expenditure on male addictive pleasures was an interim feature of the shift from a subsistence to a consumerist orientation in household budgeting.⁴⁴ Working-class income was rising faster than aspirations for home improvements and in advance of commercial developments to feed new expectations. An alternative interpretation might put more emphasis on inequalities of power between husbands and wives to determine priorities in family expenditure. One survey after another remarks upon the tendency for the housekeeping allowance to remain fixed even during periods of wage inflation. When trade unions negotiated a decent pay rise, the benefit went disproportionately to the earner rather than his dependents. Like other unorganized workers, housewives suffered most during periods of inflation. As Engels put it, in marriage the husband is the bourgeois and the wife the proletarian.

The fixity of housekeeping allowances despite inflation reflects in Young's view a gap between the material horizons of men and

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 48

⁴³ Jan Pahl has pioneered research on money and marriage in post-war Britain. She was led to consider these general issues through her earlier research on conjugal violence in which disputes over money emerged as the most significant cause of wife abuse. Many other researchers have noted the significance of financial struggle as a cause of separation and divorce (D. Marsden, *Mothers Alone*, Harmondsworth 1969, N. Hart, *When Marriage Ends*).

⁴⁴ A E Dingle, 'Drink and Working Class Living Standards in Britain 1870-1914', *Economic History Review* 25, 1972

women. Sufficiency for the male 'breadwinner' was achieved when the wage was enough to encompass a fixed allowance for his family plus the rising costs of his own pleasures. This explains the widespread absenteeism of 'St Monday' among many trades. Married men were insensitive to their wives' rising material aspirations, and the only way open to women was to take a paid job themselves. Contemporary observers used the patronizing term 'pin money' to downplay the importance of wives' earnings for household living standards. Young by contrast recognized a more fundamental motivation in the female job search. With remarkable foresight (circa 1950), he predicted the mass movement of women into the labour market to improve the fabric of the family home as well as the diet, clothing and leisure of its inhabitants. As an economic dependent, a woman had limited power to demand an inflation-proof share of family income; as a contributor to the family purse, she appears, as in Zweig's account, as a more independent and powerful conjugal partner, better placed to negotiate as an equal in the matter of family finances.

The Implications of Gender Stratification for Class Formation and Consciousness

Dispersed as the evidence is, there is no doubt that the welfare of women and children in pre-war working-class families was systematically sacrificed to the breadwinner's consumption needs at home, at work and in the pub. We cannot document the full extent of this inequality or depict its variation. No doubt some households and some regions were more egalitarian than others. Nevertheless, there is every sign that in a substantial number of households, the material welfare of wives and children played second fiddle to the recreational spending of husbands and fathers. In recent social analysis this inequality has emerged as an apparently new phenomenon, the 'feminization of poverty'. But from the perspective of women's economic history, it makes more sense to see an increasing statistical visibility of very old and well-established patterns of economic stratification.

With Zweig, we might label male expenditure on tobacco, alcohol, sports, gambling and so on as wasteful, but from the perspective of an egalitarian political philosophy, the words 'selfish', 'oppressive' or even 'exploitative' would be more apposite.⁴⁵ Whatever it is called, it has received scant attention among theorists of social stratification. Gender has never been theorized as a major axis of stratification in any of the dominant theoretical approaches to social inequality. It is as if the topic of material inequalities between men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and children is a forbidden territory of sociological research. The neglect was perhaps inevitable within theories which embodied the hope that the male proletariat would liberate humanity as a whole. Such a vision would hardly sit well with evidence of male workers systematically depriving their families to sustain their own personal comforts and addictions.

⁴⁵ To avoid possible objection from Marxist technicians, I shall use the term oppression rather than exploitation

Though it was left untheorized, the process of privatization uncovered in the Luton Study suggested major shifts in the dynamics of conjugal life alongside any realignment of class ideology and consciousness. The gender segregation of conjugal life was giving way to a more egalitarian distribution of resources and to a convergence in the perceived priorities of men and women. What were the implications of these trends for the political awareness and voting preferences of both men and women? Political sociologists confronting the swing of skilled workers away from Labour and its policies in recent decades have identified a decline in class voting in Britain, though they have not seen its gendered dimension. Franklin, for example, points to 1970 as a turning point in the structural basis of electoral choice in Britain, but he fails to notice that even before this time the Labour Party held no appeal for a substantial female segment of the working class.⁴⁶ Typically, his model of change does not even incorporate sex/gender as a possible causal variable, so he does not notice that the swing in male voting preferences seems to follow a precedent set by women.

With gender in the picture, 1970 no longer looks like the watershed election for Labour. Pushing the analysis further back we see that it is not just a matter of women deserting Labour. The party never succeeded in gaining their unwavering allegiance in the first place. To understand why, we must pose the question that successive generations of political theorists have failed to take seriously. What are the possible links between women's material experience and their voting behaviour? Is gender inequality part of the reason why women are less attracted to socialist ideologies and parties? In what follows, I shall consider the possible implications of gender for class consciousness among earlier generations of working-class men and women, who formed their households and families in the era when preferential treatment for the male household head was 'accepted' as a 'natural' fact of life.

Social Class: Masculinity in Theory and Substance

We have already seen that most sociological and socio-historical effort expended on the relationship between material exploitation and political consciousness has focused exclusively on men. Though the concept of exploitation seeks to evaluate the balance of material exchange in social relationships, its use has been confined to the contract of employer and employee and not to that between breadwinner and dependents. Likewise, politics has been defined as belonging to the *public* sphere, the sphere of capitalist social relationships dominated by men. Ironically, the neglect of organic links between public and private leads to only a partial understanding of the relationship between material exploitation and political awareness in men as well as women.

Consider the effect of inequality in the domestic sphere on the process of political socialization. Men enjoy higher living standards than their wives and children by virtue of: (1) privileged treatment in the

⁴⁶ M N. Franklin, *The Decline of Class Voting in Britain*, Oxford 1985.

distribution of food, heat and other material resources; and (2) the possibility of escaping from the home to spend leisure time in the 'masculine republic'. In both these ways men are protected from the direct experience of 'going without', even if they are not fully shielded from the sight of their loved ones' deprivation. What are the political implications of domiciliary inequality?

Material inequality within households could diminish male class consciousness by: (i) taking the edge off the class actor's perception of material deprivation, and (ii) replacing part of the sense of moral righteousness of the proletarian cause with nagging feelings of his own guilt as an oppressor. Note too that domestic inequality is not an exchange between individuals whose material interests are supposed to be opposed. It involves oppression within a circle of kinship duty, if not love and affection.

Against these tendencies which could weaken class consciousness, we must weigh the influence of 'male bonding' facilitated by the inequalities of access to the labour market and household expenditure. The generation of a sense of collective interest in men more often than women is routinely attributed to their exposure to the world of industrial work in which they experience antagonistic material relationships in a shared context where unity can be practically transformed into power. The opportunities for collective male recreational life outside the workplace have been noted, but left largely unconceptualized as a positive factor contributing to the same process. The fact of common masculinity has been ignored as an ingredient of the transformation of the 'class in itself to the class for itself'. However, masculinity as it came to be defined during the first industrial century was important to the growth of industrial camaraderie. The dominant tendency in the sexual division of labour established by the second half of the nineteenth century made the status of breadwinner a *sine qua non* of masculinity.⁴⁷

In some communities the wage-employed wife was seen as a slur on the manhood of her husband, a public sign of his inability to support his family. The same symbols held implications for the dynamics of private life. Increasingly work became the singular focus of men's lives as the 'work ethic' and 'breadwinner ethic' fused to underpin the social identity of men. Meanwhile women were increasingly 'forced', or they 'willingly retreated', into the private sphere of domestic life and into the submissive and dependent status of housewife.⁴⁸ This division of rights and responsibilities appeared to fit with Marx's vision of work as the fundamental essence of human creativity. But, in view of the gender divisions which defined the right to different categories of work in the nineteenth century, it makes more sense to view wage work as the essence of masculinity, and as a normative rather than a material essence at that.

⁴⁷ Cf. P. Stearns, *Be a Man: Males in Modern Society*, New York 1979.

⁴⁸ Cf. C. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America*, New York 1980

Nevertheless the correspondence between work and masculinity, allied to the formation of male-only occupational environments, made the industrial workplace appear as a catalyst for class formation. It was a place where males congregated for the bulk of their waking hours, where they generated their own and their family's livelihood, and where they gained a sense of self-respect and social worth. The conditions appeared to be optimum for class solidarity, consciousness and action, but among men and only men. These tendencies could be reinforced by the sexual division of leisure as well as labour. As Harrison remarks, the pub was both a site of recreation and a meeting place, a 'masculine republic in every street'. Public houses often developed as meeting places for different tradesmen, a function inherited today in names such as 'Bricklayers, Colliers, Painters, Coach-makers, Weavers, Spinners, Blacksmiths or Carpenters Arms'. They might also serve as reading-rooms for the emerging working class. One essayist at the turn of the century complained, 'The public houses resorted to by the lower classes . . . invariably take in newspapers of a pernicious tendency.'⁴⁹

As a number of experts testify, the pub in pre-war Britain was more than a second home for the male breadwinner—it was superior to his normal domicile, bringing the social division of labour between men and women full circle. Given the opportunities for collective social life among men, the generation of a sense of fellowship, of shared interests and, by extension, of political solidarity would seem to be a natural even inevitable outcome. But let us not forget that it was sustained through the systematic neglect and deprivation of women and children.

It is impossible to estimate with any precision the contribution of the British public house to processes of political socialization in the male working class in the century before 1950. The redefinition of the pub as a more gender-neutral territory is a post-war phenomenon which has coincided with a steady diminution of emotional class consciousness. Equally the loss of its reputation as a 'masculine republic' has been associated with major shifts in the degree of equality, if not symmetry, between men and women. In the latter case, a causal connection seems highly probable. The home-centred, privatized worker first discovered in Luton back in the early 1960s, unlike his Edwardian predecessor, would not see his home as a 'place oftener to fly FROM than to fly TO'. Whatever the causality, the fortunes of the pub and its social transformation are closely interwoven with changes in the social division of labour between men and women. On the question of whether the decline of the pub in male working-class life represents a plus or a minus for processes of political socialization, we should sound a note of caution. The pub was a site licensed for the sale of socially legitimate narcotics, and any stimulus to revolutionary fervour must be set beside the pacifying properties of the commodities on sale. 'The super-ego is that part of the mind dissoluble in alcohol' is the phrase used by Young to account for the

⁴⁹ Bowles, quoted by Harrison.

truly remarkable elasticity of demand for alcohol and tobacco among male breadwinners.³⁰

Though historians of the working class have not treated women as political animals in their own right, there has been some recognition that gender stratification potentially serves to undermine solidarity in the working class. As McKinnon observes, the institutions of working-class life which promoted male bonding simultaneously diminished the prospect of a political solidarity capable of unifying the *whole* working-class community. Most class theorists have neglected this point, however, because their vision of alienation as a distinctly male experience recognizes only the potential for collective action among men. This undervaluation of women's humanity is not merely misogynist, it is conceptually flawed. Women not only possess political power in the twentieth century; they use it in defiance of the hopes and predictions of radical theory. Why?

The Material and Political Life of Women

The conventional explanation for the rightist political inclinations of women is domestic seclusion. This state of existence has been taken as a given, a fact of nature rather than an artifice of culture. Since they are underexposed to the public sphere of existence, the only social arena where true political consciousness can be forged, they must be not fully formed politically and only half alive socially. If they cast a vote at all, they do so by 'default', without any real consciousness of the issues involved and how they relate to their own interests. Their political horizons are undeveloped; they are not fully *social* in a Durkheimian sense. Though few today would go so far as to attribute their lack of political savvy, as Durkheim did, to the smaller female brain, most stratification theorists have unthinkingly followed his line and assumed that because women are not socialized in the *public*, macro-sociological sphere of social life, they are uninteresting to students of class and political consciousness.³¹

What happens if we abandon this analytic prejudice? Let us begin by accepting that gender stratification is real, oppressive and a force to be reckoned in political life. Add to this a humanistic image of women as rational, intelligent and feeling subjects, ambitious for themselves and their families. The material interests of the average working-class housewife have been unthinkingly lumped together with those of her husband. It has been assumed that if she were fully exposed to the daily realities of class division, she would vote the way he does. But we have seen that the material experience of everyday life is fractured by gender and not merely by women's exclusion from wage work. The fact that the material deprivation in question is

³⁰ M. Young, op. cit., p. 316. Harrison jocularly refers to the political danger of teetotalism, identifying Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado as teetotalers. By contrast the character of Marx, 'who for a bet succeeded in having a drink in every pub along a densely pubbed two-mile stretch from Tottenham Court Road to Hampstead, does not find parallels in the lives of the 1930s dictators.' Gorbachev (Lemonade Joe) is another famous teetotaler.

³¹ R. Sydie, *Natural Women, Cultural Man*, Toronto 1987.

directly experienced in the *private* sphere of life need not make it any the less powerful as a force for developing consciousness and action/inaction, though we may agree with Lockwood that the scope for mobilizing a political collectivity of the exploited gender is less than ideal. However, examples of purposive collective action by men are also rather thin on the ground, leaving the ballot box as the principal vehicle for the expression of collective group interests.

Though you would never think it from the mountain of studies which have covered British elections since 1930, the gender disqualification in voting was eradicated in 1927. In the early days, female turnout was undoubtedly below that of men, a fact offset to some degree by their demographic excess. More recently gender has no longer been a cause of differential turnout, and as one commentator concluded in the early 1970s: 'There is overwhelming evidence that women are more conservatively inclined than men, as in most other countries. Men have given Labour a majority at every election since the war, women only in 1945 and 1966. If men only had voted, it is improbable that Dr Adenauer would ever have become Federal Chancellor of Western Germany or that General De Gaulle would have been re-elected to the presidency in 1965. Sex is the one factor that indubitably counter-balances class trends: working-class women are more right-wing than working-class men, middle-class women are more right-wing than middle class men.'²² Despite this, these are the only words the same author devotes to the factor of 'sex' in 160 pages. No tabular data are presented and there is no analysis of the causes of the right-wing female inclination. This is not unusual; in fact the inclusion of even a couple of sentences on gender is exceptional. The simple dismissal of the female as a political animal means that we do not find any studies of women's ideology and consciousness even in communities where they have always formed a sizeable part of the labour force whether married or single. If direct exposure to the world of paid work is what matters, why are the female voters of the cotton towns of Lancashire, the global cradle of capitalist social relations, just as 'conservatively inclined' as their sisters elsewhere in England? Could the answer help us understand why male voters in this stronghold of female wage-labourers are also more right-wing in their voting preferences?

How might the distinctive female experience of material deprivation within the household shape political consciousness? One possible answer can be drawn from Zweig's observation that the female, not the male, possesses the greater skill in *formal rationality*. His female informants, constantly engaged in the management of scarcity, necessarily developed a highly economic approach to everyday life. Continuing with the Weberian language, we might also add that the *sexual* division of labour, which liberates the male from the necessity to cope with the minutiae of economic subsistence, provides a more fertile soil in male social life for a view of welfare based on *substantive rationality*. Ensnared in the warm intoxicating atmosphere of the tap room in the company of good friends, the cry 'Beer drinkers of the

²² P. Pulzer, *Political Representation and Elections in Britain*, George Allen & Unwin 1967.

world unite' falls easily off the breadwinner's lips. Meanwhile his wife, huddled in bed to save heating the house in his absence, neither hears nor sees the relevance of the same sentiments.

We should not make the mistake of perceiving women as lacking in rational judgement or of confusing their miniature economism with selfishness or with a lack of generosity. The historical record of gender stratification in the first industrial century suggests that women were more self-sacrificing and more altruistic in their social relationships than men. By necessity, their altruism was prone to stop short of the front door of their domicile or at least not to extend much farther than their immediate kin and neighbours. The orientation of men towards their nearest and dearest looks distinctively individualist and selfish by contrast, suggesting that the lesser appeal of socialism to women has not been rooted in a possessive individualism that puts self ahead of others. Equally the same political appeal for men should not be seen as an uncomplicated reflection of their wider appreciation of social justice and collective moral duty. The personal politics of conjugal life in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century homes does not leave the male of the species looking like particularly effective material for the unselfish task of social liberation for humanity as a whole. It also raises interesting questions in itself about the relationships between political motivation and private conduct.

What are the political implications of being a utilitarian maximizer in the management of domestic life? Does the forced skill of 'formal rationality' in private life naturally dispose its possessor to comprehend the workings of public life in the same manner? Can the same mentality serve as a convincing explanation of why women might positively favour the party of capital rather than labour? In other words, are housewives the 'natural' allies of capitalists? It is easier to construct an argument on the negative appeal of socialism for working-class women than to see the positive appeal of policies designed to protect the interests of ruling economic groups. Many political observers have noted the apathy of working-class women, but few have raised the question 'why' in any way that explores the sexist content of the political philosophy itself.³³ Certainly we should not just assume that any particular brand of socialist politics would hold the same appeal for both sexes. In Britain, in the period between 1850 and 1950, there are good reasons for doubting that the ideology of the Labour movement carried an optimistic appeal for women. Even by the late 1970s Labour leaders, still ignorant of female aspirations for autonomy in the private sphere, failed to recognize the vote-winning potential of Tory home-ownership policies. This was amongst the most important factors in bringing Mrs Thatcher her first electoral victory in 1979. But well before this, British socialism was riddled with sexist contradictions and we do not need the blanket concept of

³³ Russell's critique of Bebel presents a spirited challenge to the benign view of the benefits and appeal of socialism for women (Appendix to B. Russell, *German Social Democracy*, London 1896).

false consciousness to explain why women were less interested and persuaded by left-wing promises. Nor was this something unique to Britain.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, the question of how women viewed their material deprivation and how they accounted for it in class and gender terms is largely lost to the empirical record. I have noted how the power of men was enshrined in legislative codes, and many historians readily accept that women recognized the legitimacy of male supremacy and of their claim to preferential treatment within the household. However, there are plenty of signs of domestic unrest. The resistance of working-class men to the idea of birth control is but one example of the way husbands obstructed their wives' attempts to increase domestic autonomy.⁵⁵ The routine evidence of male secrecy about income, the historical reports of conflict over the wage packet at the threshold of the pub, of women waiting outside the work gates to secure their share on payday, and of housekeeping allowances failing to keep up with inflation—all these suggest that the distribution of income was a critical issue of conjugal politics. The 'economic' woman observed by Zweig was unlikely to have been unaware of acts of selfish consumption on the part of the male breadwinner and we must ask what effect this experience had on her political judgement.

Could the appeal of Labour movement politics for women have been confounded by their sense that it offered no solution to the primary cause of material scarcity in their lives, their state of economic dependency on the male household head? Socialist rhetoric did not articulate the experience of gender oppression in the working class. It probably deliberately sidestepped it. Indeed the whole doctrine of mainstream socialism has underestimated the contribution of masculinity and male bonding in the growth of class formation and consciousness and the significance of gender stratification in the spectrum of material oppression. Socialism was a political programme designed to solve the social grievances of men and if it failed to strike the right chord for women, can we really be surprised? From the female vantage point, Labour policies may have looked tailor-made for men with little chance of reversing the pattern of masculine irresponsibility which eroded their material security on a daily basis. Alternatively they have been dismissed on simple pragmatic grounds. Visionary politics was a male diversion; women were preoccupied with the problems of scarcity in the here and now. Labour promises may have appeared all wind, inflated rhetoric of tap room or vault with little consideration for practicalities. This is the image of gender divisions in political consciousness which emerges from Robert Roberts' autobiography.⁵⁶ His father was a militant shop steward and habitué of the 'local', his mother a corner shopkeeper with intimate knowledge of her own and her female clients' struggle to make ends meet. There

⁵⁴ Cf. M. Nolan, 'Economic Crisis and State Policy', in I. Katznelson and A.R. Zolberg, *Working Class Formation*, Princeton 1986, p. 383, and M. Shefter, 'Trade Unions and Political Machines', *ibid.*, p. 203.

⁵⁵ M. Llewellyn-Davies, *Maternity. Letters from Working Women*, London 1915.

⁵⁶ R. Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling. Growing Up in the Classic Slum*, Manchester 1976.

is no question where the author's loyalty lies and little attempt to disguise his contempt for his father's inebriate 'socialism'.

Was this response more universal? Was female political apathy a conscious or semi-conscious form of conjugal resistance, a response to the feeling that what's good for the gander cannot be simultaneously good for the goose? If socialism was identified as a strategy for enhancing the power of male workers, what hope did it hold out for a housewife? The agent of material shortage in her direct experience was the male breadwinner insisting on his conjugal rights and privileges, maintaining secrecy about the size of the wage packet, and failing to pass on wage increases in the housekeeping allowance. If the breadwinner was perceived as the main obstacle to an improvement in the living standards of the household, how could a political party intent on increasing the power of male workers and with nothing to say about conjugal inequality really hope to attract the housewife's vote?

Gender, Privatization and Political Change

This article has explored the theoretical vacuum which surrounds the nature and history of women's political consciousness. Filling the vacuum is necessarily speculative because although the study of elections and political behaviour is a vast academic industry, past research has been systematically negligent in the analysis of what makes women vote. The absence of data is a symptom of the silence of theory. The culture of masculinity which serves as an impediment to a decent standard of living for many working-class families has also obstructed the search for intellectual understanding. Historians and theorists of class have viewed humanity as if only men counted—humankind equals mankind. The destiny of society has been seen as dependent upon the social relations of men, acted out in male-only areas of social life. The 'master' concept of class has been the tool of this masculinist vision, seeking to encapsulate the whole dynamic of conflict in human society in the antagonistic relationships of men with other men.

Defenders of this conceptual apparatus may argue that class rightfully focuses on men's experience because, until recently, the public sphere of work was a masculine domain. Such a defence might be acceptable if it could be shown that Victorian theorists and their present-day disciples actively and rigorously theorized gender and dismissed it as a vital component of social conflict. The record shows otherwise. Even Engels, who recognized the salience of male domination, sought a psycho-biological explanation for its nature. The subordination of women was rooted in men's desire to ensure paternity, a psychological impulse loosely attached to the institution of private property.⁵⁷ Men must enslave and subordinate women in order to control their procreation and thereby ensure that property passes to a genetic heir. By tying gender inequality to the evils of private property, Engels derived an easy mode of dissolution. The oppression of women would come out in the wash of a proletarian revolution. In other words, the

⁵⁷ Cf. J. Sayers, *Biological Politics*, London 1982.

salvation of women lay with the male proletariat. Women were politically passive and powerless to change their own situation. The second sex should let the first take the initiative. Engels did not perceive that seeds of destruction might lie within the contradictions of domestic life itself, that women might act independently even as isolated individuals at the ballot box, and that, more ominously for his theory, the development of domestic antagonism might dilute the propulsive force of proletarian consciousness and action in theory and praxis.

This possibility has been the theme of this article. Like other recent critics of stratification theory and research, I argue that the significance of gender to the process of class formation has been overlooked. Like the domestic labour thesis, my focus is on women's eligibility to be part of the picture not as wage-labourers but in their domiciliary roles. Where we part company is over the articulation of gender and economic class and on the consequences for the 'master' paradigm. I seek to disturb, not preserve, the corpus of masculinist theory. The substance of gender oppression cannot be confined to what women add to the quantity of surplus-value through domestic production. Women's oppression has lain historically in the 'natural' rights of men to own the 'second sex', their labour, their children, their property. These rights were converted into a virtual occupational monopoly during the first industrial century, adding financial power and dependency to the pre-existing norms of gender stratification. The analysis of the way in which women's and children's material livelihood was earned, controlled and distributed in the century before 1950 reveals a picture of severe deprivation and potential gender antagonism which, I have argued, carries important implications for the political consciousness of both men and women.

This is the link between gender and class as oppressive sets of social relationships during the age when masculinity became identified with the rights and duties of the breadwinner. Gender inequality is the missed ingredient in the rise of class politics, just as gender convergence is the secret of its decline. The process of privatization domesticated the British working man, drawing him out of the *public* and into the *private* house. Marxists looked on in dismay as male class actors came to share the same material goals as their wives, applying the censorious concept of commodity fetishism to working-class efforts to improve the living environment of their families. I have suggested that the process of 'privatization' need not be seen as a wholly negative development for the progress of human liberation. Though it may dilute the force of class as an agency of change, it has contributed to an equalization of the life chances of men and women. Left-wing theorists will find my message unacceptable and depressing. But masculinist theory must bear part of the blame for the end of class as a force for change. It has encouraged a view of human liberation occurring only through the agency of men, while it has ignored or dismissed the significance of women's material deprivation and social degradation as a significant realm of oppressive social relations. If 'privatization' can be identified as a female-inspired strategy of social equality rooted in the contradictions of gender inequality, women will have engineered their own salvation without, even despite, the efforts of the

masculine intelligentsia. The issue of when and how the process of privatization emerged, and of its relationship to the dynamics of gender and class inequality, is an important topic that I reserve for a future article.

Some readers will undoubtedly feel that I have been too harsh in my judgement of working-class husbands and fathers before the Second World War. I do not doubt that a substantial number, perhaps even the majority of male household heads, were more self-sacrificing and altruistic in service to their families than I have painted them. This does not alter the fact that a large and unknown number were not. The industrial working class of the first capitalist nation has had many eloquent spokesmen represent its case in books, pamphlets, novels and journals and it is not up to me to cloak my own argument in polite caveats in a show of respect to the conventional view of history. I speak for a female half of the working class that has all too often been misrepresented by historians as politically apathetic, irrational and irrelevant. How do we change this disparaging image? The one-sided emphasis of this article is the deliberate device of a critical sociology marshalling the available evidence to inflict (hopefully) a lasting wound on the dominant paradigm and its sexist foundations.

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When Was Modernism?

[This lecture was given on 17 March 1987 at the University of Bristol, as one of an annual series founded by a former student at the University and subsequent benefactor. The version printed here is reconstructed from my brief notes and Raymond's even briefer ones. Although he spoke on that occasion in unabating, delicate and sinewy prose—the unmistakable and, where necessary, rousing Williams style—his notes are merely composed of jottings and very broad headings ('Metropolis', 'Exiles', '1840s', '1900–1930' etc.). Down the left-hand margin are timings in ten-minute intervals: he finished according to plan exactly at fifty minutes. I cannot hope to have caught Raymond's voice accurately, but the trenchancy and relevance of one of his last public lectures are not in doubt. Postmodernism for him was a strictly ideological compound from an enemy formation, and long in need of this authoritative rebuttal. This was a lecture by the 'Welsh European' given against a currently dominant international ideology.]

Fred Inglis]

My title is borrowed from a book by my friend Professor Gwyn Williams: *When Was Wales?* That was a historical questioning of a problematic history. My own inquiry is a historical questioning of what is, in very different ways, a problem, but also a dominant and misleading ideology. 'Modern' began to appear as a term more or less synonymous with 'now' in the late sixteenth century, and in any case used to mark the period off from medieval *and* ancient times. By the time Jane Austen was using it with a characteristically qualified inflection, she could define it (in *Persuasion*) as 'a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement', but her eighteenth-century contemporaries used 'modernize', 'modernism' and 'modernist', without her irony, to indicate updating and improvement. In the nineteenth century it began to take on a more favourable and progressive ring: Ruskin's *Modern Painters* was published in 1846, and Turner became the type of modern painter for his demonstration of the distinctively up-to-date quality of truth-to-nature. Very quickly, however, 'modern' shifted its reference from 'now' to 'just now' or even 'then', and for some time has been a designation always going into the past with which 'contemporary' may be contrasted for its presentness. 'Modernism', as a title for a whole cultural movement and moment, has been retrospective as a general term since the 1930s, thereby stranding the dominant version of 'modern' or even 'absolute modern' between, say, 1890 and

1940. We still habitually use 'modern' of a world between a century and half-a-century old. When we note that in English at least (French usage still retaining some of the meaning for which the term was coined) 'avant-garde' may be indifferently used to refer to Dadaism seventy years after the event or to recent fringe theatre, the confusion both willed and involuntary which leaves our own deadly separate era in anonymity becomes less an intellectual problem and more an ideological perspective. By its point of view, all that is left to us is to become post-moderns.

Determining the process which fixed the moment of modernism is a matter, as so often, of identifying the machinery of selective tradition. If we follow the Romantics' victorious definition of the arts as outriders, heralds, and witnesses of social change, then we may ask why the extraordinary innovations in social realism, the metaphoric control and economy of seeing discovered and refined by Gogol, Flaubert or Dickens from the 1840s on, should not take precedence over the conventionally modernist names of Proust, Kafka or Joyce. The earlier novelists, it is widely acknowledged, make the later work possible; without Dickens, no Joyce. But in excluding the great realists, this version of modernism refuses to see how they devised and organized a whole vocabulary and its structure of figures of speech with which to grasp the unprecedented social forms of the industrial city. By the same token, the Impressionists in the 1860s also defined a new vision and a technique to match in their painting of modern Parisian life, but it is of course only the post-Impressionists and the Cubists who are situated in the tradition.

The same questions can be put to the rest of the literary canon and the answers will seem as arbitrary: the Symbolist poets of the 1880s are superannuated by the Imagists, Surrealists, Futurists, Formalists and others from 1910 onwards. In drama, Ibsen and Strindberg are left behind, and Brecht dominates the period from 1920 to 1950. In each of these oppositions the late-born ideology of modernism selects the later group. In doing so, it aligns the later writers and painters with Freud's discoveries and imputes to them a view of the primacy of the subconscious or unconscious as well as, in both writing and painting, a radical questioning of the processes of representation. The writers are applauded for their denaturalizing of language, their break with the allegedly prior view that language is either a clear, transparent glass or a mirror, and for their making abruptly apparent in the texture of narrative the problematic status of the author and his authority. As the author appears in the text, so does the painter in the painting. The self-reflexive text assumes the centre of the public and aesthetic stage, and in doing so declaratively repudiates the fixed forms, the settled cultural authority of the academies and their bourgeois taste, and the very necessity of market popularity (such as Dickens's or Manet's).

A Selective Appropriation

These are indeed the theoretic contours and specific authors of 'modernism', a highly selected version of the modern which then

offers to appropriate the whole of modernity. We have only to review the names in the real history to see the open ideologizing which permits the selection. At the same time, there is unquestionably a series of breaks in all arts in the late nineteenth century, breaks with forms (the three-decker novel disappears), and with power, especially as manifested in bourgeois censorship—the artist becomes a dandy or an anti-commercial radical, sometimes both.

Any explanation of these changes and their ideological consequences must start from the fact that the late nineteenth century was the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production. Photography, cinema, radio, television reproduction and recording all make their decisive advances during the period identified as modernist, and it is in response to these that there arise what in the first instance were formed as defensive cultural groupings, rapidly if partially becoming competitively self-promoting. The 1890s were the earliest moment of the movements, the moment at which the manifesto (in the new magazine) became the badge of self-conscious and self-advertising schools. Futurists, Imagists, Surrealists, Cubists, Vorticists, Formalists and Constructivists all variously announced their arrival with a passionate and scornful vision of the new, and as quickly became fissiparous, friendships breaking across the heresies required in order to prevent innovations becoming fixed as orthodoxies.

The movements are the products, at the first historical level, of changes in public media. These media, the technological investment which mobilized them and the cultural forms which both directed the investment and expressed its preoccupations, arose in the new metropolitan cities, the centres of the also new imperialism, which offered themselves as transnational capitals of an art without frontiers. Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London, New York took on a new silhouette as the eponymous City of Strangers, the most appropriate locale for art made by the restlessly mobile emigré or exile, the internationally anti-bourgeois artist. From Apollinaire and Joyce to Beckett and Ionesco, writers were continuously moving to Paris, Vienna and Berlin, meeting there exiles from the Revolution coming the other way, bringing with them the manifestos of post-revolutionary formation.

Such endless border-crossing at a time when frontiers were starting to become much more strictly policed and when, with the First World War, the passport was instituted, worked to naturalize the thesis of the *non*-natural status of language. The experience of visual and linguistic strangeness, the broken narrative of the journey and its inevitable accompaniment of transient encounters with characters whose self-presentation was bafflingly unfamiliar raised to the level of universal myth this intense, singular narrative of unsettlement, homelessness, solitude and impoverished independence: the lonely writer gazing down on the unknowable city from his shabby apartment. The whole commotion is finally and crucially interpreted and ratified by the City of Emigrés and Exiles itself, New York.

But this version of modernism cannot be seen and grasped in a unified

way, whatever the likenesses of its imagery. Modernism thus defined *divides* politically and simply—and not just between specific movements but even *within* them. In remaining anti-bourgeois, its representatives either choose the formerly aristocratic valuation of art as a sacred realm above money and commerce, or the revolutionary doctrines, promulgated since 1848, of art as the liberating vanguard of popular consciousness. Mayakovsky, Picasso, Silone, Brecht are only some examples of those who moved into direct support of communism, and D'Annunzio, Marinetti, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound of those who moved towards fascism, leaving Eliot and Yeats in Britain and Ireland to make their muffled, nuanced treaty with Anglo-Catholicism and the celtic twilight.

After modernism is canonized, however, by the post-war settlement and its complicit academic endorsements, the presumption arises that since modernism is here, in this specific phase or period, there is nothing beyond it. The marginal or rejected artists become classics of organized teaching and of travelling exhibitions in the great galleries of the metropolitan cities. 'Modernism' is confined to this highly selective field and denied to everything else in an act of pure ideology, whose first, unconscious irony is that, absurdly, it stops history dead. Modernism being the terminus, everything afterwards is counted out of development. It is *after*, stuck in the past.

The Artistic Relations of Production

The ideological victory of this selection is no doubt to be explained by the relations of production of the artists themselves in the centres of metropolitan dominance, living the experience of rapidly mobile emigrés in the migrant quarters of their cities. They were exiles one of another, at a time when this was still not the more general experience of other artists, located as we would expect them to be, at home, but without the organization and promotion of group and city—simultaneously located and divided. The life of the emigré was dominant among the key groups, and they could and did deal with each other. Their self-referentiality, their propinquity and mutual isolation all served to represent the artist as necessarily estranged, and to ratify as canonical the works of radical estrangement. So, to *want* to leave your settlement and settle nowhere like Lawrence or Hemingway, became presented, in another ideological move, as a normal condition.

What quite rapidly happened is that modernism lost its anti-bourgeois stance, and achieved comfortable integration into the new international capitalism. Its attempt at a universal market, trans-frontier and trans-class, turned out to be spurious. Its forms lent themselves to cultural competition and the commercial interplay of obsolescence, with its shifts of schools, styles and fashion so essential to the market. The painfully acquired techniques of significant *disconnection* are relocated, with the help of the special insensitivity of the trained and assured technicians, as the merely technical modes of advertising and the commercial cinema. The isolated, estranged images of alienation and loss, the narrative discontinuities, have become the easy iconography of the commercials, and

the lonely, bitter, sardonic and sceptical hero takes his ready-made place as star of the thriller.

These heartless formulae sharply remind us that the innovations of what is called modernism have become the new but fixed forms of our present moment. If we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of *post*-modernism, then we must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century, a tradition which may address itself not to this by now exploitable because quite inhuman rewriting of the past, but for all our sakes, to a modern future in which community may be imagined again.

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*The Politics of Post-Fordism:
or, The Trouble with 'New Times'*

The 'post-Fordist' hypothesis concerning the development of a new 'mode of regulation' of modern capitalism is a fertile and important one. It was developed, following Gramsci's¹ key early understanding of the significance of mass production and consumption, by Michel Aglietta² and other members of the 'regulation school' in France in the 1970s.³ It has been further developed by Michael Piore and Charles Sabel in the United States, as the formulation of a choice of 'post-Fordist' options for American society.⁴ The essential theoretical breakthrough of this school was its repudiation of a simple economism, and its recognition, following the wider influence of structuralist and sociological perspectives on Marxist debate especially in France, of the complexity and multidimensionality of modern capitalism. The post-war stabilization of this system, on both economic and political levels, required that a new attention be given to the enhanced role of the state, to mass consumption, to processes of socialization, and to the ideological role of the information industries in the 'consumer societies'. The

reproduction of the social relations of capitalism (not least the relations of gender) became as important to Marxist theory as the system of production itself. The 'regulation school' sought to formulate these issues as a theory of political economy, as the concomitants and conditions of possibility of different forms of production.

Writing towards the end of the long boom, and at the point of breakdown of the class compromise that had characterized it, the theorists of the regulation school also identified that the whole system was entering a period of major crisis and transition. In response to the contradictions and problems generated by the 'Fordist' system of regulation at its most developed stage (problems of inflation, declining rates of profit, the enhanced bargaining power of labour, 'decommodification' of many sectors of production and consumption in response to political pressures, economic stagnation, etc.), new strategies were being developed by capital, both intellectually and in political practice. These included the internationalization of its operations, transferring 'Fordist' forms of production to less developed countries, while maintaining crucial command and research functions in the metropolises; the imposition of more stringent market disciplines on capital and labour, through the international 'de-regulation' of trade, movements of capital, and labour; the internal 'marketization' of operations within large firms, through the institution of management by local profit-centres; the development of new technologies and forms of production and marketing (the famous 'flexible specialization')⁵ and a dispersal and reduction of the scale of production in order to elude the countervailing cultures and institutions of organized labour.⁶ Thatcherism in Britain is in part an instrument of these strategies. Elsewhere (e.g. West Germany, Sweden, Italy), the response to the crisis of Fordism has been less dramatic: governments have sought to restore profit-levels by changing priorities within a framework of class compromise and the welfare state, rather than by attempting to tear up these pacts and re-write their terms completely. (In the case of France, an attack on class compromise and the mediating role of the state was attempted, but failed. In the United States, it may now have been fought to a standstill.)

'New Times'

Now, several years after the first discussions of these arguments in

¹ Antonio Gramsci, 'Americanism and Fordism', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London 1971, pp. 279-316.

² Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation. The U.S. Experience*, Verso, London 1979, 'World Capitalism in the Eighties', *New Left Review* 136, November-December 1982.

³ See Alain Lipietz, *The Enchanted World*, Verso, London 1985; *Miracles and Mirages: the Crisis of Global Fordism*, Verso, London 1987.

⁴ M.J. Piore & C.F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide*, New York 1984. Also C.F. Sabel, *Work and Politics: the Division of Labour in Industry*, Cambridge 1982.

⁵ See Robin Murray, 'Benetton Britain', *Marxism Today*, November 1985, and 'Life after Henry (Ford)', *Marxism Today*, October 1988. See also J. Gershuny, *Social Innovation and the Division of Labour*, Oxford 1983.

⁶ See S. Lash and J. Urry, *The End of Organised Capitalism*, Cambridge 1987; Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour. Social Structures and the Geography of Production*, London 1984.

New Left Review, they have become central to political debate in Britain, through a series of important interventions by *Marxism Today* and by the Communist Party of Great Britain. The idea of 'post-Fordism' is central to the thoroughgoing programmatic revision presented in the Party's new draft strategy, *Facing Up To the Future*, and in the various 'New Times' symposia of *Marxism Today*.⁷ The political importance of this debate goes well beyond the CPGB. Such is the thinness of the Labour Party's political culture that *Marxism Today* has, since the virtual demise of *New Socialist*, become more or less the theoretical organ of Labour revisionism too, sometimes lining up the left of both parties in opposition to its new realist positions.

The 'post-Fordist' hypothesis on which these new positions are based is the nearest thing we have to a paradigm which can link widespread changes in forms of production to changes in class relations, state forms and individual identities. It thus pursues the far-reaching scope of explanation and connection between disparate phenomena that has previously been expected of Marxist political economy. As Geoff Mulgan has pointed out, it is Marxist in its basic *form* of analysis (notably in the causal priority it assigns to the new information-based technologies of production and distribution), even though it is highly subversive of left-wing orthodoxy in what it infers for the position of the working class, the appropriate forms of state and welfare institutions, and the roles of communist or socialist parties.⁸ It is valuable to have had this new paradigm placed so firmly in the centre of debate, and none of the criticisms made in this article should be taken to diminish appreciation of that.

As is so often the case, the sense of an ending of an era has illuminated its general shape. What have been unmistakably clarified in the writing of Piore and Sabel, Aglietta, Lipietz and their English exponents are the social relations of Fordism: the link between the systems of mass production and mass consumption, the role of Keynesianism and the welfare state in underwriting long-term growth and profitability, and the integration of trade unions, on an industrial and later national-corporatist basis, in the management of the post-war Fordist economy. The counterposed model of 'post-Fordism' also has the power to explain the shape and direction of the emerging economic system, at least in part.⁹ Modern technical systems do depend increasingly on

⁷ *Marxism Today*, issues from September 1988 to February 1989.

⁸ Geoff Mulgan, 'The Power of the Weak', *Marxism Today*, December 1988.

⁹ The ideal types of Fordist and post-Fordist modes of production and regulation can be summarized (with some sectoral applications) as follows

Fordism

low technological innovation
fixed product lines, long runs
mass marketing

steep hierarchy, vertical chains of
command
mechanistic organization

Post-Fordism

accelerated innovation
high variety of product, shorter runs
market diversification and niche-ing

flat hierarchy, more lateral
communication
organismic organization

the rapid and powerful processing of information, more than on their sheer mechanical power. The speed of knowledge-production, and of technical innovation, has vastly accelerated. Product ranges are modified more quickly, and are more internally diversified, than in classic forms of production for mass consumer markets. Modern information systems allow both finer tuning of product flows and mixes in relation to changing and segmented markets, and greater producer influence over consumer demand. The social relations of these new systems of production and distribution are different from those of 'mass production', as was pointed out long ago by sociologists of organization. Where there is rapid change and uncertainty, flatter hierarchies and greater lateral communication between members are more functional for organizational goals than bureaucratic command models, in which all communication must pass up and down hierarchies or lines of command.²⁰ This pattern of lateral interdependence may exist between organizations—the science park or 'Third Italy' models²¹—as well as within organizations, for example, in the research and development section of a firm. Markets capable of rapid innovation and flexible specialization may encourage the diversification of demand rather than tending to homogenize it in the interests of economies of scale. Hence the phenomena of market-nicheing, lifestyleism, etc.

The value of this model is that it attempts a historical materialist explanation of the changes associated in Britain with Thatcherism, at the level of changes in the means of production and their consequences for class structures and ideological forms. Without such a model,

⁹ (cont.)

<i>Fordism</i>	<i>Post-Fordism</i>
vertical and horizontal integration central planning	autonomous profit centres; network systems; internal markets within firm; out-sourcing
bureaucracy	professionalism, entrepreneurialism
mass unions, centralized wage- bargaining	localized bargaining; core and periphery; workforce divided; no corporatism
unified class formations, dualistic political systems	pluralist class formations; multi-party systems
institutionalized class compromises	fragmented political markets
standardized forms of welfare prescribed 'courses' in education	consumer choice in welfare credit transfer, modularity, self-guided instruction; 'independent' study
standardized assessment (O level)	teacher-based assessment (GCSE) or self- assessment
class parties, nationwide	social movements, multi-parties; regional diversification

²⁰ On mechanistic and organismic organization types, see T. Burns and Stalker, *The Management of Innovation*, London 1966; C. Perrow, *Organisational Analysis: a Sociological View*, London 1971, and *Complex Organisations: a Critical Essay*, Scott Foreman 1979; M. Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, London 1964.

²¹ On Italy, see M.J. Piore and C.F. Sabel, and C.F. Sabel, op. cit; also Linda Weiss, *Creating Capitalism: The State and Small Business since 1945*, Oxford 1988.

we are liable to be left with explanations set in basically neo-classical terms: either a view of the market as the norm, from which state intervention, trade unionism, 'political overload' etc. are deviations; or else an argument against markets that is made in mainly normative language, in terms of distribution, externalities, public goods etc. We finish up with a largely prescriptive antithesis of state versus market, the claims of equality versus those of freedom, whilst the sphere of factual definition and explanation—the description of how things *are*—is left to the liberal right. The 'post-Fordist' model, in which production remains at least one dominant category, has the great merit of being an attempt to theorize structures and their effects. It thus becomes possible, in principle, to derive explanations, predictions and strategic choices based on assessments of possibility. By contrast, liberal and social democratic models tend to confine us to ahistorical and normative choices, and a politics based on the ethics of redistribution.

This model appears to have considerable cogency and explanatory power, and its theoretical ambitions are admirable. There are, however, serious problems in determining its scope of application. It is far from clear how much of the emerging economic system fits this new pattern of technology and organization, and how much still operates either in old 'mass production' modes, or by still more technologically-backward methods dependent on unskilled labour, such as those found in most of the (expanding) hotel and catering trades. Even the state-of-the-information-arts example of television raises this question in acute forms. Just when the 'Channel 4' model has been established to the general acclaim of the post-Fordist intellectual public, the system as a whole is threatened with regression under pressure of market forces to the worst forms of mass formula-programming on a global scale. What seems to be emerging is not one 'progressive' mode of information-based production, but a plethora of co-existing and competing systems, whose ultimate relative weight in the system is impossible to predict. Since socio-technical systems do not develop completely autonomously, but only in response to cultural definition, conflicts of social forces, and political decision, it is dubious in principle and possibly misleading in fact to make linear extrapolations from what might seem to be 'leading instances', or current trends, to the shape of a whole system.

There is even greater uncertainty in regard to the social and political relations of the 'post-Fordist' means of production. It is possible to see a clear logic in the coexistence of mass production and consumption and the Keynesian welfare state after the war, though the implicitly somewhat 'functionalist' approach of 'post-Fordists' understates the importance of political and class factors—the effects of social conflicts—in achieving this temporary settlement. Similar extrapolations are now being attempted for the post-Fordist mode of production, as if flexible forms of welfare, politics and administration could be 'read off' from these new forms of production. Decentralization of government, greater consumer choice in the welfare sector, a larger informal or voluntary welfare sector, and more spontaneous or 'networked' forms of political organization are all supposed to follow

in some ways from the new technical and economic order. Thus, the kind of Fordist 'fit' between the mass production of goods and a similarly 'massified' provision of public services is taken as the model of the relation we should be looking for between 'flexible', consumer-led systems of production, and equally flexible, consumer-driven systems of welfare. Mass production was to mass welfare as flexible specialization should be to consumerized welfare; the content of the terms varies, their relation remains constant. For exponents of the new paradigm, socialists must be persuaded that to defend 'mass', Fordist patterns of welfare, politics and resistance is to remain locked into obsolete and discredited structures. Forms of resistance that were appropriate in the old system are deemed to be mainly an obstacle to progress and fresh thinking in the new.

Production and Welfare Politics

But it is not at all clear what the causal connections are supposed to be between the spheres of production and those of welfare or politics in this new 'post-Fordist' era. One implicit hypothesis is that consumers who are led to expect variety and choice in consumer markets will or should settle for nothing less in the welfare sector. There is some validity to this, though there are great dangers in turning commodity markets into a normative model for other social relations. For good reasons, socialists have historically subordinated rights and powers of individual choice in the sphere of health, welfare and education to the claims of relative and absolute need. The contractual relations between buyers and sellers in the market have been contrasted with the claims of human obligation and relationship in the public sector.¹² The idea that an injured person will only be attended by the ambulance if he has a valid insurance policy, or that pupils or patients will be given only an amount or quality of teaching or health-care proportional to the fees or premiums they have paid, has always been anathema. Much socialist (and religious) thinking about welfare has historically been based on a polar contrast between goods conceived as commodities and goods provided from belief in common human values and purposes. The ethos and goals of consumer choice cannot be pushed very far in these spheres (for example, health care) before they conflict severely with the overriding values of human need.¹³

Another possible level of connection between production and welfare lies in technological innovation itself, though the welfare sector so far has been backward in this area of development compared with industry, retailing or financial services. (This relative technical stasis is one aspect of the pressure to 'marketize' the welfare system. A situation where productivity gains are confined to the private industrial sector, but where an increasing public welfare budget has to be funded from

¹² The classic statement is by R.M. Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*, Sydney 1970. Conflicts between claims of citizenship and those of desert as judged by the market are the subject of T.H. Marshall's seminal essay, 'Citizenship and Social Class', in *Sociology at the Crossroads*, London 1963.

¹³ See Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice*, New York 1983.

them, is seen as unstable and unsustainable for capital, and in reality presents a real problem for any economic system.)

One can see the potential of information technology in public spheres—for example, more individual and flexible access to medical information and educational provision, or more flexible and decentralized management of public services such as education. *Some* aspects of present Tory reforms of welfare services—requiring audit of medical performance in the NHS, or establishing measures of comparative success in the school system—are positive in principle, if not in their political intention. Similarly, better technical resources may make it possible to operate an income maintenance or combined tax/benefit system that is more flexibly, transparently and speedily adjusted to meet differentiated needs—for example, those of single parents or the low paid. The customization of personal insurance and pensions by the private financial sector is an example of what new technologies might have made possible for the public sector in this sphere. One could similarly imagine a public housing system in which allocation, transfer and choice would be made much more competitive with private ownership, through the use of appropriate information systems. One can also conceive of new interactive technologies being used in support of public access to information, and to make involvement in the political process more direct and easy. Participation in neighbourhood council, school governors, or even internal party elections could be made much less onerous if votes were cast through computer terminals linked into urban or national fibre-optic cable networks. Technological developments favouring 'customization', and the culture which emerges from their diffusion in the market sector, undoubtedly change both the environment of provision and choice and people's expectations of services. There are good reasons for thinking about how the provisions of the public domain could be improved by such technical means.

However, it is clear that the shape of this environment is not and will not be determined by new technologies alone. For Marxists, the law of value dominates the shaping of these systems. For pluralist, neo-Weberian theorists, the interests of competing collectivities, above all of social classes, are paramount. Both conceive technologies as resources or means of power, not as causal agents in their own right. It depends on both specific technical conditions and local balances of social forces whether one socio-technical system or another is adopted or preferred. It is for this reason that capital may in the same period introduce quite different systems of technology and organization in different social contexts. For example, small-scale, network-based, differentiated, flexible systems of television production (the Channel 4 model) are used at the same time as mass-market, formula-produced, highly-capitalized television series to be beamed by satellite for international consumption. Or as Lipietz has demonstrated, 'post-Fordism' in the West, where highly educated and skilled populations render one set of producer and consumer forms possible, co-exists with 'primitive Taylorism', 'peripheral Fordism', and ultimately 'Fordism' in Third World economies. The unifying explanation of these differences is to be sought in the strategies of capital, in the

context of the resistance presented to its activities, not in technological imperatives per se.

The Threat of Collectivism

What is argued here, in other words, is the primacy of the actions and strategies of classes in the explanation of changes in the political economy of capitalism.⁴ 'Post-Fordism' is better seen as one ideal-typical model or strategy of production and regulation, co-present with others in a complex historical ensemble, than as a valid totalizing description of an emerging social formation here and now. The partial and localized breakdown of the Fordist system of mass production and regulation is to be understood in part as an innovative, profit-seeking response by capital to the potential of the new technologies. But it has also, in large measure, been a response by political interests representing capital to the adverse balance of social forces produced in the latter years of the 'Fordist' system. This had increased the bargaining strength and political weight of trade unions, social democratic parties and the constituencies they represented, and of the decommodified public sector, to the point where it seriously threatened the viability of some capitalist economies.⁵ Where severe economic or political crises occurred, notably in Britain and the United States, radical forces of the right won control over formerly consensus-oriented conservative parties, and effected a deliberate and sustained 'roll-back' of the countervailing powers of the Fordist era. The panic of the dominant classes at the social gains of the subordinate classes and their institutions (which could be locally oppressive in their own ways) was the primary energizing and integrating force behind 'Thatcherism' and its cognates elsewhere.

New technologies provided the resources for an alternative strategy (of 'restructuring') for capital in some sectors, though in others—for example, the motor industry—the transfer of 'Fordist' systems to parts of the world where labour was less able to contest them than in the metropolitan countries was more important than any general shift away from the economics of mass production. (The car industry has become more internationally integrated, and more oligopolistic in ownership and control, not less, in the era of post-Fordism.) A consumerist culture generated expectations which could be successfully played by the right against the limitations of mass welfare provision of the post-war decades.

But the underlying purpose of this was to remove collectivist threats to capital accumulation and authority, and to give private capital access to potential markets (in health, insurance, pensions, education and training, transport, energy, prison building and management)

⁴ For a critique of neo-functional assumptions of the regulation school, see Simon Clarke, 'Overaccumulation, Class Struggle and the Regulation Approach', *Capital and Class* 36, Winter 1988.

⁵ There is a large literature on the crisis of the 1970s, on both right and left. See, for example, Samuel Brittan, *The Economic Consequences of Democracy*, London 1977; James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, New York 1973, and *Accumulation Crisis*, Oxford 1986; Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State* London 1984.

from which it had previously been excluded. Capital as a whole sought to gain by recommodifying sectors recently excluded from the market, and by the disorganization of resistance to capital which followed from the restoration of market disciplines. Particular sectors (e.g. finance, private health, telecommunications) gained new commercial opportunities. The freeing of British capital markets to international competition and take-over has had the effect of subordinating the whole economy to universal and standard measures of profit and loss, as we see in the exposure of companies to take-over, of whole industrial sectors to rationalization and sometimes extinction, and in the current pressures for the massification of the publishing and television industries. Differences (in industrial cultures, modes of production, community identities) are expunged by these processes, as, in Marx's words which have been given such new resonance by Marshall Berman, 'all that is solid melts into air'.¹⁶ The humanized environments for 'leisure shopping' in rehabilitated city centres are designed to sell often-standardized kinds of commodities and lifestyles in apparently more sociable and identity-rich settings.¹⁷

For those sectors of capital which have to operate in different environments, there is no contradiction between the centralization of many powers of the state, sometimes using modern technologies to assure more uniform control, and the decentralization of certain aspects of production and consumption.¹⁸ It makes sense, from this point of view, to standardize educational provision at the lower levels of the system (allowing local decision only within a rigid framework of curriculum and financial allocation), while at the same time encouraging its customization and marketization at the top. This is also the intention of Thatcherite policy in the sphere of health, where public provision has been subjected to disciplines intended to reduce it to low-grade 'mass production', at a moment when a rhetoric of consumer choice and diversity is encouraged at the higher levels of the system. Flexible specialization makes economic and strategic sense in some sectors and locations, whereas other systems of regulation are being deliberately reinvigorated in others.

There are larger continuities in the operation of the Fordist and Thatcherite states than is usually recognized. No less than in the Keynesian period, state power is being used by the right to construct and maintain class allegiances. Whilst the rhetoric may be individualist—the state as the strong guarantor of competition and market discipline—the reality is the calculated deployment of material resources and regulatory power to construct new class alliances favourable to capital. While the redistributive powers of the local state are restricted, the tax policies of the national state have massively reallocated income

¹⁶ M. Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, Verso, London 1983.

¹⁷ See S. Lash and J. Urry, op. cit., and David Harvey, 'Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanisation: Reflections on Post-Modernism in the American City', *Antipode*, Vol. 19, No. 3, December 1987. See also articles by Peter Hall, David Harvey, M.J. Rustin et al., in *International Participations Catalogue of XVII Milan Triennale, International Exhibition on World Cities and the Future of the Metropolis*, Milan 1988.

¹⁸ On Thatcherism, see Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, Verso, London 1988; also S. Hall and M. Jacques, eds., *The Politics of Thatcherism*, London 1983.

from poor to rich. As economic rents have been imposed on council house tenants, tax privileges for owner-occupiers have been maintained, with enhanced value as a result of rising house prices. Discounts for council-house sales benefit only those affluent enough to afford the mortgages, and detach a key segment of the upper working class from dependence on the local state. The freeing-up and privatization of pensions is supported by tax deduction. Share ownership is encouraged by windfall discounts. The aim is nothing less than the re-stratification of British society, in which a minority (because of the electoral system, majorities are not presently needed for this strategy) entrenches itself in power by the use of the distributive and disciplinary powers of the state. The Thatcherite strategy is in its own ways as collectivist as Fordism. It seems an odd time to be debating the obsolescence of class, or the irrelevance of central state power to class interests.

One needs to see Fordism and post-Fordism as specific, willed resolutions of conflicts at the level of social relations, not as the automatic outcomes of the technological imperatives of 'mass production' or its information-based successor. The key to understanding these forms are the relations between the *strategies* of capital and labour, and the material conditions in which they are conducted. These are, above all, relations of power. It is paradoxical that at the point when the fit between the class interest and the political strategy of the new right has become so close (more transparently so than in periods dominated by class compromise), theorists of the left have become so critical of class-based approaches to political strategy on their own side. The political identity crisis proclaimed by *Marxism Today* (the attack on class theory, the idea of a 'socialism without guarantees', etc.) seems to have no counterpart on the right, where the scope of application of market theories is even bolder (what can't plausibly be privatized?), and where ontological self-doubt seems non-existent.

The focus of *Marxism Today's* 'New Times' positions on the implications of the information economy for production, consumption, organization and identity is thus both illuminating and partial. It makes new links between hitherto unconnected phenomena, as all theoretically informed political analysis should do. It manages to sound up-beat and almost optimistic in a period of almost unrelieved defeat. Let us ask an old-fashioned question about this emerging perspective. To whose particular world-view and social situation does it primarily give expression? Who are these relative optimists able to see bad times as New Times?

A Socialism of Designers

'Designer socialism', as its critics sometimes call it, really is the socialism of designers. That is to say, the world of flexible specialization is the world as seen from the point of view of some of its beneficiaries—themselves 'flexible specialists' such as researchers, communicators, information professionals and designers, whose specific capabilities involve the handling and processing of information. In the 1960s, John Kenneth Galbraith developed the idea of a new level of contradiction

in capitalism, between what he called the 'technostructure', those strata empowered by their specialized and irreplaceable technical knowledge, and capital itself.¹⁹ Capital depended for its decisions on these highly skilled servants—it could not do without them. This was Galbraith's early version of the 'new service class', now re-identified in the New Times symposia as the key movers of post-Fordism. This perspective is most evident in the high programmatic priority given to education, training and research as functional for 'progressive modernization', but also, of course, as central to the life-world of the man or woman for whom the capacity to acquire, apply and transmit knowledge is *the* market resource. Arguments for the decentralization of decision-making, for the informal welfare sector, for neighbourhood control, parent power and cooperative housing, also reflect the central position that this new and enlarged intelligentsia is likely to occupy in more pluralized and devolved systems, as the strata who have the cultural capacities to make use of such spaces to find fulfilling and influential roles. Even the liberated view that consumption and shopping are now really all right cannot but reflect the fact that the bearers and primary intended recipients of this message are not the poor but the active enfranchised participants in consumer and cultural markets. Indeed, they are among their prime customers. Affinities between the editorial and advertising matter of newspapers are not only to be found nowadays in the pages of the *Sunday Times* colour supplement. Likewise there is a connection between the theme of identity (and the New Times writers' surprising open-mindedness towards the positive aspects of individualism) and the social formation of these products of education, modern communications, and mental labour. It might be recalled that the 'discriminating consumer' was the theme of an earlier echelon of middle-class radicals, that more high-minded and elitist generation which founded the *Consumer's Association* and *The Good Food Guide* and its analogues, both to secure value-for-money for themselves and as missionaries to help a larger number of people to do the same, according to what two of them have called 'the law of stratified diffusion'.²⁰

The social strata chiefly spoken for by the post-Fordist programme possess cultural capital but little material capital, to use Bourdieu's important concept.²¹ The preoccupations and priorities of the New Times analysis reflect this situation of relative cultural advantage and material disadvantage in the sphere of class competition. A field of battle is thus mapped out between 'material' and 'cultural' capital—roughly, business versus the quality of life and the environment, commercial taste versus discriminating minority tastes and lifestyles—whilst the large part of the population who possess few capital resources at all, material or cultural, are allowed to disappear almost out of political sight. Their characteristic institutions of social defence—mass public provision, trade union organization, 'inefficient' local

¹⁹ J. K. Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*, London 1967; see also Alvin Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of a New Class*, London 1979.

²⁰ In M. Young and P. Willmott, *The Symmetrical Family*, London 1973.

²¹ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London 1986.

authorities and nationalized industries deflected by union pressure or capture from below into providing 'uneconomic' wage-levels and conditions for their workforces—are redefined as obsolete, inefficient and undefendable. A new field of class struggle (I make use of the pluralistic theory of classes advanced by Weber but also by revisionist Marxists such as Erik Olin Wright²²) is defined by the post-Fordist model, but it subordinates the old working class to a by-stander or supporting role, as the only one which it any longer has the historical weight to play. Meanwhile those located on the other main axis of cultural stratification and competition cited by Bourdieu, that of inherited social capital, also have been pushed to the margin by the Thatcherites' ousting of the aristocratic grandees from their former leading role in the Tory Party. The political representatives of the two classes thus displaced eye each other from time to time as potential allies against the common enemy, in their shared dislike of the materialism and individualism of the new *arriviste* business class, and around the idea of renewing the post-war consensus, as it fades from memory. Radical bourgeois republicanism, however theoretically and historically impeccable the case for it might be,²³ seems practically to be a less appealing position when Mrs Thatcher behaves like a closet republican herself, and when the Prince of Wales would almost certainly prefer a government of the centre to the one we actually have.

It is in the nature of things that radicals (and others) scripting scenarios for new societies write themselves some of the best speaking parts. Ideology broadly amounts to the universalizing of sectional interests, though there can be debate about what is and what is not universal in a given period. The Fabian conception of socialism privileged the high-minded, socially responsible roles of a fraction of the professional and administrative middle class. Leninism in its classic and more recent forms gives prominence to the vanguard role of the party militant. The socialist utopias of skilled artisans in the nineteenth century were similarly modelled on their own life-experiences, and on the values, roles and distinctive vision of the good society to which they gave rise. It is therefore nothing unexpected, or to be criticized per se, that we find now a socialism of this new intelligentsia. But we should keep in mind that it is precisely that, and remember that there remain other groups in society for whom it does not easily speak.

²² See Max Weber, 'Class, Status, Party', in *Essays from Max Weber*, ed. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, London 1948; F. Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: a Bourgeois Critique*, London 1979; Erik Olin Wright, *Classes*, Verso, London 1985. The most important difference between these models is that for Weberians the primacy of class is a contingent, historical fact, arising from collective forms of social action based on differential power resources (For a most impressive generalization and historical demonstration of this approach, see Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* Vol. 1, Cambridge 1986.) For Marxists, by contrast, contradictions originate at the level of systems and their necessary attributes (e.g. the impersonal force of the law of value), and collective actions are the consequences rather than their prime source. These models can, however, generate convergent explanations of historical situations, as with Weber's concession to Marxism that the divisions between those owning and those not owning capital were the primary sources of class conflict in modern capitalism. 'Post-Marxist' critiques of class theory, e.g. by Laclau and Mouffe and also Stuart Hall, move towards a voluntarist/subjectivist view of class identities.

²³ See Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy*, London 1988.

Of course, the leading role assigned to the information industries, the intelligentsia and mental labour in this theoretical system is not only a consequence of special pleading by the beneficiaries of cultural capital. It seems certain that in this late phase of capitalism information has become a greater productive force than ever before, as the resources devoted to technical discovery increase, and the lead-time between the development of new knowledge and its industrial application shrinks. The enhanced role of the cultural sphere has been a dominant theme of post-war Marxism (the influence of Gramsci and Althusser, for example), and of the theory of post-industrial society of Daniel Bell²⁴ and other sociologists influenced by functionalism. Political struggles—notably the events of 1968, which no doubt formed the politics of the French regulation school—have themselves sometimes seemed to take a mainly cultural form. The new concern with style and fashion, as matters of political interest, resonates with actual preoccupations of consumer culture, though whether the left should follow or resist these is another question.

Implications for the Labour Process

These developments perhaps call for significant revision of the classical Marxist models of the labour process. The importance of technical innovation and development was insufficiently understood by Marx, who mostly saw the process of production as a zero-sum conflict between labour and capital, not as a positive-sum process in which all might sometimes gain. It is this development which is implicitly acknowledged in Aglietta's distinction between extensive (pre-Fordist) and intensive (Fordist) regimes of accumulation. Insofar as mental labour does become more central to the production process, it is not surprising that those who live by it gain in social power, just as the depopulation of the countryside earlier had its consequences for class relations. Whilst ecological issues are usually seen as belonging in the sphere of collective consumption (perhaps the common interest of the entire human race), they also belong in a specific way to the sphere of mental labour, representing the self-awareness and responsibility of those who work with information regarding the powers for good and evil that their knowledge has. Still, while the possessors of cultural capital may at times have significant influence on the production process, they by no means control it. The means of mental production—laboratories, universities, television stations—are rarely owned by their workers, and indeed in most of these sectors we have recently seen an increasing assertion of external control, by other capitals and powers than those of pure ideas. It is understandable, however, that in this environment, the new intelligentsia should develop an optimistic view of its leading role.

Marxism Today does the left a service in demonstrating that any relevant progressive politics in Britain today has to take account of the interests and aspirations of the 'information classes', and nothing that is said is intended to detract from that. What is more problematic is

²⁴ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, London 1974, and *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, London 1979

what it may leave out, how complete it is as a socialist vision. To understand this we have to look at the political tradition and project in which 'New Times' is located. It does, as we have already said, seek a Marxist and materialist *form* of explanation of emerging conditions. It follows *Marxism Today's* earlier analysis of Thatcherism in the centrality it gives to the concept of hegemony, which is now seen as a means not only of characterizing the negative ideological power of Thatcherism, but also of constituting an alternative to it. It is also an immediately political project, concerned with influencing debates and political reconstruction at a crucial time for the left. On the one hand, it confronts the problem of reestablishing the Communist Party's relevance as a political organization. There is a conceivable fit here between the 'informal', 'networked', lateral concept of organization deemed appropriate to these information-rich times, and the idea of a catalytic rather than a mass or vanguardist role for those clustered around *Marxism Today*, who might reasonably conclude from the political analysis they read that it does not matter much whether or not they are Party members. On the other hand, there is the larger political aim of influencing rethinking in the Labour Party. 'New Times' is offered implicitly to Labour's policy review process as an unofficial theoretical framework, and was hailed almost as such by Bryan Gould in his admiring comments on *MT's* capacity to travel light, without excess ideological baggage.

Various constraints and distortions have been imposed by these political purposes on the development of the post-Fordist model. The pressure of Thatcherism and the wish to see its defeat have led the 'New Times' project, as well as the Labour Party, to adapt itself unduly to certain powerful Thatcherite assumptions. An example of this is the confusion, evident in *Facing Up To The Future*, between the long-term aims of building a new socialist perspective and practice, and the immediate purpose of writing a policy manifesto most of which the Labour Party might be persuaded to adopt in the next two years. The priorities set out for education, training and research, child-care, cooperative housing, and new forms of social ownership (wage-earner funds, for instance) are presented as key items for a new Labour post-review policy statement—all four emphases echoing the successful programmes of the Swedish Social Democrats. On the other hand, the downgrading of proportional representation as an issue for the 'long run' (do they imagine everything else will be done quickly?) suggests a desire to keep open dialogue with the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership, for whom electoral reform so far remains anathema (though trade union and PLP opinion seems now to be changing). The democracy, civil rights and constitutional reform agenda set out by Charter 88 now seems likely to be central to immediate efforts to construct a renewed climate of opposition to the Thatcher government. It becomes therefore a significant political choice whether or not to break with Labour's adamant proscription of discussion of most constitutional issues.

The priority given to the problem of contesting Thatcherism electorally, with its implicit model of the political process as the marketplace in which this competition has to be won, leads some 'New Times'

contributors to make unfortunate concessions to values that are probably better simply regarded as those of the other side. The positive emphases given to modernization, consumption and individualism are instances of this tacit accommodation to the values of resurgent capitalism, in order (they hope) the better to fight it. The idea of a 'progressive restructuring of society', or 'socialist modernization', gives centrality to vapid notions of 'modernity' which in this form should have no place in socialist programme-making. It should be a question of modernization or re-structuring for what or whom. One recalls Harold Wilson's ill-fated modernization programme which, despite its momentary brilliance at reconciling divergent forces, failed to cover for long its weakness of theoretical conception and political will. Charlie Leadbeater's idea of 'socialist individualism' involves an even worse confusion of language, evading as it does the choice that socialists make, more-or-less by definition of their position, for altruistic and social forms of life against competitive and individualistic ones.²⁵ It is not that the choice can be a simple or absolute one—rather that it is our role to give substance and vision to the relational half of this antithesis, leaving egoism and the blessings of the hidden hand to others.

Quality of Life

The criteria socialists might use to evaluate the quality of life of a society should have to do not only with per capita income, consumption or individual choice, but with people's enjoyment of and fulfilment in their work, participation in public life, roles of responsibility as active citizens, and contribution to a shared culture through arts, sports or other kinds of expression. We need to recover the idea of a more dense and participatory culture, not merely endorse the goals of greater individual freedom to choose between commodities or services. (One index of the quality of life of an institution, such as a school, neighbourhood or work-group, might be whether or not it is able to generate live performances—whether cabaret, dramatic, or musical—which reflect and celebrate its common life and concerns.) One thing which the Marxist tradition has been right about all along is its emphasis on creative work (whether paid or unpaid) as the central form of human fulfilment, and the work-group as one of the most potentially creative forms of relationship. Consumption is no moral substitute for the values and experience of production: for socialists there has to be more to life than shopping, enjoyable as this on occasion may be. Whilst Leadbeater tries to give his 'socialist individualism' a cooperative and universalist shape, by means of ideas of extended social rights, it is difficult to draw telling distinctions between individualisms of one hue and those of another. The problem lies in the limitations of the language and concept of the individual. The project of redefining the socialist project in individualist terms for tactical or rhetorical reasons seems doomed to concede more to the ethos of the Thatcherite age than it can ever hope to win back from it.

²⁵ Charlie Leadbeater, 'Power to the Person', *Marxism Today*, October 1988

Another aspect of the diversion of the post-Fordist debate by immediate political purposes (urgent enough as they are in themselves) is a recurrent and negative emphasis on the fundamentalism, dogmatism and general backwardness of the orthodox left.²⁶ It is as if the left were largely to blame for the catastrophe of Thatcherism, and as if its unthinking conservatism now constituted the main obstacle to the emergence of an alternative. This impatience with supposedly backward-looking aspects of leftism (shared in double measure by Labour's 'new realists') echoes the attitudes of previous modernizers of Labour's intellectual right, also admirers in their time of the Swedish road. Whilst these strategic debates are undoubtedly necessary, and some of their programmatic conclusions valid, the failings of left fundamentalism are given a misplaced emphasis, onto which is projected in negative form the more intractable problems of evolving a new socialist language. If workable solutions could be formulated, these impatient critiques of the traditionalist left would be seen as the diversion that they are. One could say the same, more strongly, about Neil Kinnock's public preoccupations with the embarrassments caused to the Labour Party by the left. The left, like humanity at large, does not make history in circumstances of its own choosing; there is more to be learned from thinking about the unhappy circumstances—a failure to maintain viable class compromises which can hold the loyalty of the working class to Labour governments, mistaken and ill-equipped economic management, a persistently weak Labour culture and political apparatus, dismal electoral misjudgements by demoralized leaders, one after another—than from the left's undoubted errors.

The new revisionist position claims too much, too soon, for the post-Fordist paradigm over more orthodox socialist and social-democratic definitions of the situation. The ideal-typical model of post-Fordism, abstracted from the larger field of strategies pursued by capital, is used to generate a particular set of programmes, social agents and residual negatives, to the disregard of older theoretical descriptions which continue to have explanatory power. For example, priority is given to emergent social strata in constructing an oppositional force, as if conflicts of an earlier phase between industrial labour and capital were about to disappear for ever. The position of the growing underclass is similarly under-theorized and under-weighted. Yet a significant fragment (around ten per cent) of the European and North American labour force has been simply displaced from the First World economy by its internationalization, and by competition with Third World proletariats, in a corporate system which calculatedly deploys pre-Fordist, Fordist or post-Fordist strategies, whichever seems to its local advantage. Not even the position of the subordinate classes in the First World can be correctly theorized without a grasp of this larger integration of capitalism. More challenging is the possibility, through a global model of modes of capitalist regulation, of devising an internationalist politics with a more material foundation

²⁶ See Paul Corrigan, Trevor Jones, John Lloyd, Jock Young, *Socialism, Myths and Efficiency*, Fabian Society, 1988, for a trenchant pamphlet directed mainly against the taken-for-granted attitudes of the left.

than the ethical internationalism of aid and protest campaigns, admirable and important initiatives as these are.²⁷

Critiques of the state, which may be apt in the sophisticated context of post-Fordist aspiration, may also fail to take adequate note of the continuing roles of democratic institutions in defending working-class interests against those of capital and the market. In the case of the National Health Service, overwhelming priority continues to be due to the defence of an institution whose overall performance and ethos have been good. Whilst improvements in regard to efficiency, accountability and consumer choice are of course desirable, as new levels of aspiration grow, it is simply mistaken to suggest in the case of *this* institution that its defects are responsible for the crisis in which it has been placed. Rather, the crisis has been imposed by deliberate strategy of a government committed to markets (which is to say, to opportunities, both global and local, of capital). Public reaction to attacks on the service has shown how successful, by absolute and comparative standards, its overall performance has been. This is a prime example of the non-obsolescence of the main traditional conceptions and ideals of social democracy.

Even in other, less popular sectors of provision, such as housing and education, it has taken heavy discriminatory social engineering by the Thatcherites to undermine support for public provision. Council house sales have succeeded not primarily as a result of the innate defects of public housing management (real and needing remedy as these are), but through adjustment of tax, rents and sale-discounts, to ensure massive redistributive advantages to a particular segment of the upper working class who can afford to opt for home ownership. Whilst, of course, some high-rise housing designs have failed, and systems of repair have been unsatisfactory, the worst problems of housing estates are probably due more to poverty and unemployment among their tenants (naturally concentrated in the least desirable housing) than to the quality of housing provision itself. Disorganized communities are much more liable than badly managed or designed buildings to generate vandalism, loneliness and disrepair. Meanwhile difficult conditions on public estates, where they occur, are used as evidence against council housing per se.²⁸

It took a year-long struggle with the teachers' unions, probably (like the miners' strike) deliberately engineered by Government, to destabilize the state education system, and prepare the ground for its restructuring. The effect of the disruptions of this period was to increase public anxiety about local government competence in the

²⁷ The global scale of operation of capital should make us in the West sombrely aware once again that it is impossible to realize socialism in one corner of the world, while exploitation continues unabated elsewhere. The main historical significance of post-Fordism may be the escape it has permitted capital to make from the constraints which were increasingly imposed on it during the later years of the Fordist class compromise.

²⁸ An influential report of research which has influenced these arguments is Alice Coleman, *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing*, Hilary Shipman, 1985; which incidentally illustrates the contemporary nexus between polemics against modernism and the critique of urban planning.

management of schools. The real successes of the post-war reforms in raising standards (measured by the steady increase in school-leavers obtaining qualifications) and in reducing social class segregation were thus successfully obscured. While Government was pursuing a political strategy, aimed ultimately against the principle of universalistic and comprehensive state provision, the teachers remained locked into a narrow trade union approach. By choosing tactics of maximum disruption at minimum cost over a serious attempt to mobilize parents, schoolchildren and communities on a populist basis, the teachers' unions weakened the possibilities of resistance to the Education Reform Act at the next stage.

The Left and Public Provision

These various spheres of contest over public provision show the continuing relevance of several superimposed frames of political argument. On the one hand, the resources of elected government still need to be deployed to defend the powerless against the forces of the market. On the other hand, they reveal the relevance of the new agenda of individual choice and difference, exploited by the right to expose the limitations of state provision. The intellectuals insisting on New Times see themselves as the improvers, decentralizers and customizers of welfare, in contrast to old-style bureaucratic providers and political bosses. But unless they can meet the basic interests of majorities in providing these services, and maintain their belief in them, mass public services will not survive to be managed.

The current restructuring of welfare-state systems poses difficult problems for the left. For the time being, health and education remain overwhelmingly dependent on public funding, and the challenge is to make the newly imposed forms of decentralization, consumer control and mandatory competition work ultimately to strengthen public provision. Even though the Government intention is probably to achieve a stratification of these systems, and the privatization of their top segments, the fact that they remain public at this point means that the battles are not yet lost. Faced with the imposition of 'exit' (or market forces), socialists have to demonstrate the superiority of 'voice' (or public participation),²⁹ and the advantages of planning over competition in meeting universal human needs. They have to show that measures of quality can count for as much as the measures of money. There do need to be new values for public services, though 'differentiated collectivism' describes them better than any kind of individualism. They won't emerge through the denunciation of earlier social democratic achievements. Some basic loyalty to and respect for what was made in the past is the prerequisite of any further advance.

The central dynamic force of capitalism remains, of course, strategies for the accumulation of capital, on a global scale. How to modify this force so that its destructive effects are contained, how to build countervailing powers which support values of need, community, equality and social relationship, and how to advance the claims of democratic,

²⁹ Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, Cambridge, Mass 1970.

participatory institutions against the unequal powers of private property, must remain the broad agenda of socialism. Issues of strategic power—for example, to constrain the operations of a globally integrated financial system where they cause intolerable damage to living standards and ways of life—are no less vital than they ever were to socialist strategy.

There is an evident shift in both *Marxism Today* and the Labour Party's thinking from these central but intractable problems of how to control the systems and circuits of capital, to more immediate and apparently manageable issues of electoral recovery and programme construction. The problematic of ideological hegemony (how to win it back for the left) subtly displaces the deeper issue of how to achieve and exercise economic and political power over structures. A disposition to methodological idealism—a preference for the level of culture over that of structure—has always been latent in neo-Gramscian thinking, the obverse of its great power to illuminate the ideological sphere. The rejection of *a priori* economic and class determinism seems sometimes to carry with it an implicit voluntarism,³⁰ and the intractable problems of how to effect lasting changes are pushed into the background. Yet the history of Labour governments since at least the 1960s shows that the problems of how to achieve and exercise power over this system are as essential to solve as the problems of how ever to win back a foothold in government.

We unjustly abuse public services and those whose work it is to provide them by too readily endorsing the criticisms of their enemies. Whilst we need to remember that service-providers *can* confuse their own interests with those of their clients, we have also to defend traditions of public service as an indispensable resource. If we accept that disinterested practices of public service are next to impossible, we might as well abandon any idea of socialism.

Our strategic conclusions will clearly depend on whether we conceptualize post-Fordism as only one ideal-typical option of capital in a field in which others remain important, or whether we read the whole political map in post-Fordist terms. Particular social strata are constituted by new forms of production. The possessors of cultural capital, especially in the new forms generated by the information industries and an expanded education process, are social strata which it is vital for the left to win. Certain issues and political priorities follow from this new development, and since these new strata are a rising social force, their world-view can be expected to have especial weight in contemporary political strategy.

But capital uses its technological resources, and the human inputs which it has to combine with them, in various ways, and each of these defines different potential fields of social conflict. Specialization and

³⁰ See E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso, London 1985, debates between N. Geras and these authors in *New Left Review* 163 and 166; and M. J. Rustin, 'Absolute Voluntarism: a Critique of a Post-Marxist Concept of Hegemony', *New German Critique* 43, Winter 1988.

diversification establish local concentrations of skill and knowledge—'technostructures', we might call them. The strategic power and autonomy which this confers on certain producer groups, in conditions of labour scarcity, generates favourable conditions of work, and this accounts in part for the attractions of the post-Fordist model of cooperative artisanal or mental production for some of those empowered by this process.³¹ Firms may seek to contain the power of such suppliers of scarce knowledge and skill by subjecting these functions to market or quasi-market disciplines, thus exposing them to competition. Where such markets still generate positive opportunities, their development may also generate more optimistic perspectives.

But since monopolies of skill potentially impose high supply costs on capital, strategies are also adopted to negate the benefits they might confer on sections of the workforce. Routinization and mechanization may be pushed to their limit at one end of the production process, whilst a self-motivated and interactive style of work group is deemed functional at the other. The de-skilling processes analysed by Braverman in the 1970s co-exist with the reskilling of labour which is a more prominent aspect of post-Fordist theory.³² Exposure of the labour market to the widest national and international competition—through attacks on all 'restrictive practices', the weakening of trade union powers and the freeing of the international movement of labour—is another strategy for reducing labour's bargaining resources. A pool of unemployed is a further means of subordinating labour, though rigidities and internal differentiation in the labour market have made this on the whole an ineffective sanction in many sectors. Such measures, however, together with failures in the education and training systems, have helped to produce a large underclass of long-term unemployed, whose needs and hopes need also to be addressed in the formulation of political programmes.

The Unification of Resistance

The models of Fordism and post-Fordism, each with some partial explanatory force, suggest a methodology for more temperate and systematic thinking about programme and strategy. These models identify a variety of potential agents and sites of resistance, which will need to be unified in opposition to the right. Some issues, including those cited summarily by *Let Us Face The Future*, do have the potential to unify many interests, and can be theoretically located in terms of a model of forms and relations of production. Education and training, for example, should be seen as a means of empowering workers in increasingly fragmented labour markets, in which more 'mass' forms

³¹ However, on social divisions within the new service class, see Mike Savage, Peter Dickens and Tony Fielding, 'Some Social and Political Implications of the Contemporary Fragmentation of the "Service Class" in Britain', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 12/3, September 1988.

³² Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital: the Degeneration of Work in the Twentieth Century*, New York 1974. It is interesting to note that the influence neither of Braverman nor of the post-Fordism theses depended in the first instance on substantial empirical evidence. Research rather tends to follow than precede the impact of these bold theories.

of collective resistance are less effective. It may also serve the interests of sections of capital, and thus form the basis of a new kind of class compromise.

In seeking to protect the life-chances of the least skilled in the labour market, one conscious strategy could be to enrich the content and requirements of work, by upgrading its specifications of skill. An example of this may be taken from the field of welfare. Menial custodial functions will be humanly less satisfying, and materially less rewarded, than forms of care which involve a higher 'value' of human relationship and understanding. To supply skills through education and training, and to encourage more sophisticated demands for them by raising expectations of the quality of goods and services, are therefore ways of defending the interests of workers as well as benefiting consumers and citizens. Enhancement of the 'mental' (and emotion-rich) content of labour may thus be a feasible goal as well as a secular trend of the modern process of production. Advanced economies can benefit from the addition of skills and 'value-added' to the production of human services as well as material goods.

The relations of women, and of different age-groups, are also changed by the emergence of new productive systems, and their interaction with potential labour supply. The sharp decline in the birth-rate during the 1960s is likely to produce labour scarcities in many economic sectors in the next decade, so that the demand for a prolonged active life among older citizens, and for a return to work among women with children, will increase. Women's opportunities in the workplace, and the take-up by women of educational opportunities, have already markedly increased in the last two decades. This trend will probably continue, creating needs for flexible work-patterns and opportunities to participate more fully in social fields outside the family. But women's life-experience also typically involves non-market relationships of kin, friendship and neighbourliness, considerable unpaid work, and the relations of mutuality and identification which go with these. Women's increased involvement in the labour market may therefore increase moral resistance to the norms of economic calculation and punitive discipline, even though women will also pursue the opportunities for self-development and economic advancement which paid work provides. Clearly, new modes of consumption, and changed demands on social services (child-care for working mothers, paid or community care of the aged) are also bound up with these changes in forms of production.

In the sphere of economic planning, positive opportunities follow from decentralization and technological sophistication. The local state has a potential role in economic development where small firms require a network of supporting and interdependent services to succeed in competition.³³ But on a national and continental scale too,

³³ Robin Murray's article in *Marxism Today*, October 1988, discusses a range of production-oriented intervention strategies. This decentralized, socialist supply-side approach follows work at the GLC, reported in *The London Industrial Strategy*, Greater London Council, 1985, and other GLC reports on the London economy.

infrastructures of telecommunications, research and transport remain necessary for economic success. Regulation of unfair competition, damage to environments and defence of consumers also imply large economic roles for the state. Both the old and new agendas of social democratic regulation and intervention are relevant in these conditions.

It may also be possible to appropriate the Thatcherite ideology of individual capital ownership for socialist purposes. The necessary *functions* of capital investment (as the provision of future wealth) can be distinguished from the specific distribution of rights to capital embodied in private property. Why should not all citizens share in the disposition of social wealth, as well as of income? Whilst wage-earner funds, because of their collectivist basis and the managing role they hold out to trade unions, have recently been the left's preferred form of capital ownership, they are not the only one imaginable. Collective rights of employees to allocate a proportion of company profits to social purposes, or the use of cooperatives or local elective power to manage citizen shareholdings in businesses, are other options for the democratization of capital. The Thatcher Government has acted to distribute shareholdings and real estate for its own minority purposes. But perhaps we should see the ownership of capital (and land) as a right of all citizens, needing forms of representation and trusteeship other than those of the central state.

Thatcherism may be understood as a strategy of post-Fordism initiated from the perspective of the right. That is to say, a determined attempt to use the advantages of new technology, mobility of capital and labour, the centrality of consumption, and more decentralized forms of organization, to strengthen capital and to attack the corporate structures of labour. It is important not to celebrate these new formations, but to ask (as MT also admittedly does) if these new conditions of production can also give rise to counter-strategies for the left. The issues identified above suggest that they can be—but only if one recognizes the overriding centrality of the contest of capital and labour, and the ways in which these different superimposed forms of production remain essential resources for each party to the conflict.

The essence of this argument is that the variety of strategies of capital—post-Fordist and others—which will continue to coexist with one another each generate specific sites of potential resistance and conflict. Whilst there is a tendency to see issues of consumption as taking precedence, these remain connected to, and dependent on, the material resources provided through capital and labour markets. People cannot for the most part consume unless they earn, or own. The old socialist emphasis on how people earn, and what they own, does not lose its primacy because they earn or own more, or earn or own differently from before. At the level of social agency, it seems obvious that socialists have to find ways of linking the claims of 'old' and 'new' constituencies. It would be premature and self-destructive to write off the old social divisions as irrelevant, and to construct a radical politics wholly on the interests of the middling strata. (The Dukakis campaign in the US recently showed how this strategy can fail.) But more

interesting than the issue of agency is the argument at the level of analytic models. The need here is to relate post-Fordism to the full range of strategies of capital, and to consider strategic political issues in terms of the social relations of the whole contemporary mode of production, not simply of one advanced segment of it.

Marxism Today has long been a stimulating voice in socialist debate, offering an invaluable stream of fertile political ideas, some of whose positive aspects are explored above. But whilst advocating a pluralist and diversified socialist position, *MT* has not been particularly pluralist in its own editorial habits—a limit of tolerance or disvaluation of debate it may inherit from its past, and shares with progressive Communists in other lands, even in Italy. It has been searching after, for good political reasons, a new 'hegemonic fix', when perhaps what is more necessary at this point is to define the space, both within and beyond the left, in which a new paradigm might be developed and a holding strategy put in place. It is not possible to know the relative weight of pre-Fordist, Fordist or post-Fordist components in the emerging political economy, and potentially fatal to neglect the existence and problems of any of them. The new post-Fordist analysis needs space and time for its elaboration, without being foreclosed by the demands of strategists or programme-makers for instant political payoffs. It is not only different social groupings and identities but also different political forces within the left, and within the socialist movement, that have to learn to live together in constructive dialogue. Otherwise, the right will continue to win all the crucial battles.

The Conditions for Progress

This suggests to me an urgent priority different from the construction of a programme for either the Labour or the Communist Party: namely, the campaign to re-make the constitutional frame of politics which has been launched by the recent publication of *Charter 88*, with such large public response. The plurality of agencies and lines of conflict generated by coexisting modes of production and consumption is proving impossible for any party to articulate in a coherent programme or ideological appeal. More immediate and modest political aims are for this reason appropriate. A precondition of any political progress is to displace the Thatcherite structure of government from its position of power. A context in which compromise settlements in various fields can again be pursued and successfully negotiated, and in which social forces can contend with one another for at least incremental gains, is the most favourable situation the left can for the moment hope to achieve. A campaign for constitutional reform now offers the best hope of drawing fresh energies into an oppositional movement, given the inflexibility of the Labour Party and its inability to draw many new (or even old) social forces into political action. There seems a chance that the presocialist issues taken up by *Charter 88* of individual liberties and democratic rights, and the basic antipathy to Thatcherism to which these give specific expression, will in the next months gather real momentum.

If oppositional political parties of the left and centre can neither

mobilize nor cooperate against the right, then energies must be looked for outside their formal structures. A potential advantage of Charter 88 is that it will allow a breadth of opposition outside the parties which is not now mobilized either within or between them. The renewal of party programmes and the development of constitutional campaigns are not incompatible objectives. But they pose conflicts of priority, especially if the price for being attended to inside the Labour Party is conformity or silence on the constitutional questions which it abhors. *Marxism Today* seemed to have chosen the narrower party road to renewal, at least before the publication of Charter 88. This priority, if it is such, is misjudged. Most important at this point is the 'broad class and political alliance' for which *Marxism Today* formerly called, and the joint campaign to democratize the structures of government through which it might now be made. It remains to be seen how the authors of 'Let Us Face The Future' and 'New Times' will respond to these significant new developments.



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Kurdistan in the Middle East Conflict

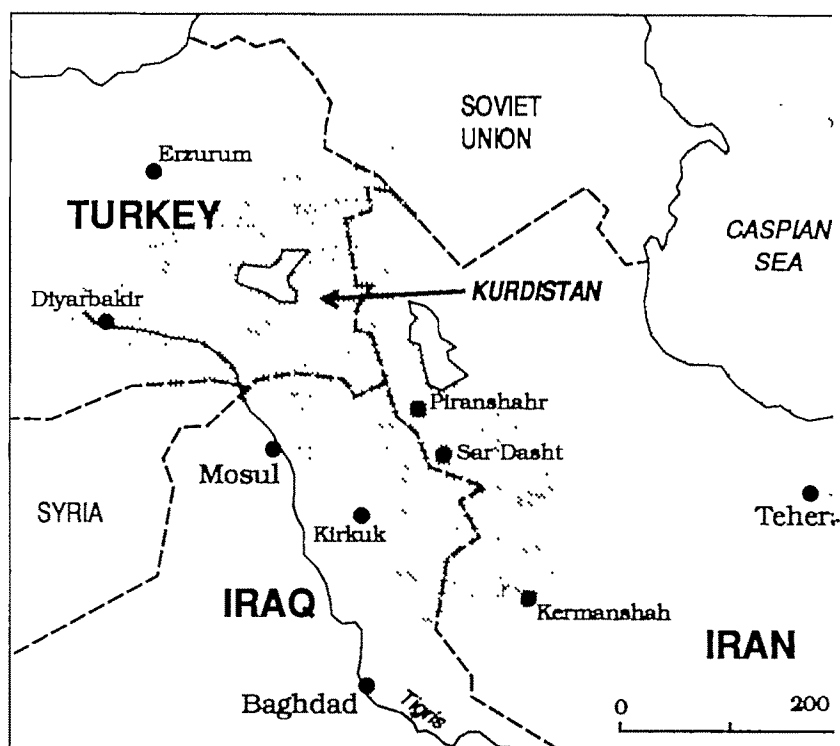
In March 1988 the Western media once again shocked their audience by bringing home horrific stories of the extensive and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons on the civilian population in remote Kurdistan. As two reporters visiting the area put it: 'Neither side in the Gulf War has ever been particularly scrupulous about observing the accepted norms of international conflict. But what has been happening in the past year, and especially the last week, in the remote corner of north-eastern Iraq reveals previously unplumbed depths of savagery.'¹ However appalling these pictures were to Western observers, to the Kurds they were neither unexpected nor without precedent. Some twenty-five years earlier, in August 1963, another reporter had sent an almost identical account of the Unequal War, in almost the same area: 'The Iraqi army appears bent on breaking the Kurds' will to resist by methods of total war. In addition to bombing and machine-gunning some villages... crops have been burned. Villagers have been deported to a zone south of Kurdistan. The economic blockade of the north has been imposed more vigorously. As a result by next spring some Kurds may face starvation.'²

In the present century a systematic process of de-Kurdification has been carried out by different regimes in Iraq, Turkey, Iran and to a lesser extent Syria. The Kurds' very existence has been denied in Turkey, where the mere mention of their name is tantamount to treason and they are referred to as 'the mountain Turks who have forgotten to speak Turkish',³ while in Iran officials have somewhat patronizingly called them 'pure Iranian' in a deliberate confusion of the terms 'Iranian' and 'Aryan'. In Iraq the authorities have been forced to acknowledge

¹ Andrew Gowers and Richard Johns writing in the *Financial Times*, 23 April 1988.

² *New York Times*, 2 August 1963.

³ A recent incident in the Parliament of Turkey gives an insight into the strength of national chauvinism within the political elite in that country. Mehmet Ali Eren of the opposition Social Democratic Populist party broke tradition by naming 'Kurds' in a parliamentary debate. He complained that they had been prevented from speaking their language and even the traditional (Kurdish) names of villages had been changed. According to the *Guardian* (21 January 1988): 'his remarks were met by boos and cat-calls from government MPs. "There are Turks in Turkey", shouted Mr Onural Soref Bozkurt of the ruling Motherland Party.'



the Kurds' existence—partly because of the sheer weight of the Kurds in the total population⁴ (variously estimated between one-third and one-quarter) but above all because of the militancy of Kurdish nationalism in that country.⁵ However, Kurdish politics in general and its Nationalist movement in particular remain underdeveloped, reflecting the forcible fragmentation of the territory between five different countries and the backward conditions of Kurdish society. Located at the geographical edge of all five countries, Kurdistan comprises inhospitable, highly irregular mountainous and for the most part barren lands. It would not be much of an exaggeration to characterize it as a collection of the most underdeveloped regions of some of the most backward countries (excluding the Soviet Union) of the Middle East.

The Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria have had a long history of

⁴ Population figures for Kurdish minorities are highly unreliable and speculative. The authorities try to play down the number of Kurds in their respective countries, for obvious reasons. On the other hand, the nationalists give inflated figures. A reasonable estimate would be 8 million Kurds in Turkey, 5 million in Iran, 4 million in Iraq, 600,000 in Syria and 120,000 in the Soviet Union. In addition, there are some communities in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Algeria, Europe and the United States, altogether giving an estimated 20 million Kurds.

⁵ This has not stopped the Iraqis joining the Iranians and Turks in denying the Kurdish identity. For example, Abdul Karim Qasim, the first post-revolutionary President of Iraq, maintained that the 'Kurds' did not constitute a separate race and their name was derived from the Persian title 'Kurdu' usually bestowed upon brave warriors. See Dann, *Iraq under Qasim: A Political History, 1958-1963*, London 1969, p. 331.

struggle for independence, and to this end they have forged alliances with regional and extra-regional forces out of necessity, convenience or at times sheer desperation. The absurdity of some of these alliances gives the appearance that the Kurds—or their political leaders—have behaved opportunistically and have been willing to sell out to the highest bidders, irrespective of the principles and the issues involved. The leaders themselves tend to describe these vacillations as pragmatic 'tactical manoeuvres' necessary for survival. The rise of the political parties over the past four decades has been rapid, but their adherents mainly come from the urban intelligentsia. Despite the accelerated pace of de-tribalization, the vast majority of Kurds still live in the countryside where tribal ties and personal loyalties to Aghas, Khans, Mullahs and Sheikhs are very strong. Thus, to talk of Kurdish Nationalism as if it were a homogeneous, cohesive movement is quite misleading. In the past five decades there have been at least two different strands of nationalist sentiment, with different underlying causes and different visions for an independent Kurdistan. The first one is based on the sentiment of the tribal 'chieftains', who have been antagonized by state intervention in their traditional way of life. As a dying breed their natural reaction has been resistance to assimilation and change. The nationalist aspirations of the urban intelligentsia, often shrouded in Marxist phraseology, are as much opposed to tribalism as they are hostile to the unification ideologies of the 'host' governments. In this clash between 'traditionalism' and 'progressive nationalism' the two parts hang together in a perennial relationship of love and hate, the urban intelligentsia providing the education and the cultural and international solidarity for the movement, while the military backbone still lies in the tribes.

The purpose of this article is to trace and evaluate the role of Kurdish political organizations in the most recent phase of the protracted conflict between Iraq and Iran, since September 1980. The Iran-Iraq conflict is a complicated and recurrent theme in the region, which has been extensively researched and cannot be discussed here. But to explain the recent course of events, it is necessary to go back to an earlier phase, culminating in the Algiers Agreement of March 1975, in which the fate of the Kurds was a significant if not decisive element.

From 1961 to 1979

The full-scale Kurdish revolt in Iraq, which broke out in the autumn of 1961, had causes of a mixed nature. The Kurds had participated in the July 1958 revolution to overthrow the monarchical regime, with the expectation that the new revolutionary government would be sympathetic to their demands. But although the third article of the Provisional Constitution did contain a statement to the effect that Kurds and Arabs were partners in the homeland, by September 1961 it had become clear that Qassim was dragging his feet and was not prepared to give in to Kurdish demands. At the same time, Qassim introduced a progressive Land Reform Programme, limiting individual landholdings to a maximum of 1350 acres in the north, together with a Land Tax applicable to cultivated lands across the country. The purpose of the agrarian reform was to broaden the social base of the revolution

by winning over the support of the peasantry, while the Land Tax was designed to raise government revenue from non-oil sources—an important consideration with the prospect of the nationalization of foreign oil companies and the potential boycott of Iraqi oil looming large on the horizon. Clearly, Qassim was trying to avoid a repetition of the experience that had led to Mossadeq's downfall a decade earlier.

Not surprisingly, the large landowners of Kurdistan did not like the idea of the Agrarian Reform, put up resistance to its implementation and refused to pay the Land Tax. This latter aspect initially prompted the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) to denounce the rebellion as 'reactionary, inspired by the imperialists, and directed against the progressive Iraqi Republic'.⁶ But opinions were divided within the KDP, and after much deliberation, the Talebani faction won the argument and the party joined the rebels in December 1961, primarily to prevent it from being dominated by the tribal leaders led by Mulla Mustafa Barazani, and with the ultimate goal of steering it towards the cause of 'autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iraq'.

The position of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) is worth mentioning here. Having declared both Qassim and his Kurdish adversaries as 'progressive', the ICP found itself in a dilemma. While preparations for a full-scale war were underway on both sides, the ICP suggested that the two sides should forget their differences and form a common front (in conjunction with the ICP, of course) to challenge imperialism. Curiously, the sister party in Iran, the Tudeh, later found itself in an identical position and took exactly the same course of action.

Taking advantage of Qassim's weaknesses, the tribal leaders in the north and the KDP in the south of Kurdistan consolidated their position and enjoyed a de facto state of autonomy until early 1963. With the Baathist coup of February 1963, negotiations opened between the two sides, only to be aborted when it was found that they were wide apart on the terms of reference. The Baathist negotiators talked of a need for 'decentralization' of the administrative machinery, which had nothing in common with the demands for autonomy advanced by the Kurdish representatives. Meanwhile, the split between the 'tribal' and the 'intellectual' leaders of the Kurdish movement had widened, to the extent that by 1964 Mulla Mustafa had driven the KDP leader into exile in Iran, and had assumed unchallenged leadership of the movement. Between 1964 and 1975 Mulla Mustafa effectively was the Party, all other decision-making bodies serving merely as his rubber stamp. Furthermore, from 1966 onward, the Kurdish uprising had been skillfully manipulated by the Shah (with substantial help from the Israeli Mossad and the CIA) to pressurize Iraq. Officially Iran was host to some 200,000 Kurdish refugees from Iraq and was spending \$300 million a year on their upkeep. However, Iran's real involvement went much further. Apart from providing arms, munitions and general material support, Iranian intelligence units were supplying Barazani with information about the movement and position of Iraqi units. In assisting the Kurdish movement in Iraq, the Shah not only

⁶ See S Jawad, *Iraq and the Kurdish Question 1958-1970*, London 1981, p. 76.

weakened the Baghdad regime but also ensured that the movement could not survive without Iranian aid. When the dependence was complete, the Shah demanded that Barazani use his muscle to put an end to all the political activities of the Kurds in Iran. Mulla Mustafa was accommodating and asked—indeed forced—the militants of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) to do nothing to provoke the Tehran government. The strength of the Barazani-Shah alliance was such that more than forty KDPI militants were either killed or handed over to the Iranians by Barazani's men.⁷

To neutralize this alliance the Iraqi government proposed a plan on 11 March 1970, which awarded a limited degree of autonomy to its Kurdish territory. It included recognition of Kurdish as one of the two official languages, the appointment of a Kurdish vice-president, and representation of Kurds in the government and bureaucratic machinery commensurate with their share in the total population. Thus, although it fell far short of recognizing the political autonomy of Kurdistan, it was the most radical plan hitherto proposed in the region and could have opened up the possibility of some agreement between the two sides. However, the Shah managed to persuade Barazani that he could get a better deal by rejecting the plan, which he did. A semi-autonomous Kurdistan in Iraq was the last thing the Shah wanted, given the presence of five million Kurds in Iran and their aspirations for a United Kurdistan. His objective, well documented in official US reports,⁸ was to sap the resources of both sides and force the conflict into a perpetual stalemate. The Kurdish war of 1972-75 was by all accounts a covert Iran-Iraq war, which cost Baghdad \$2 billion a year. As Iraq's military and economic resources could not indefinitely sustain this commitment, there was no other choice left than to bypass Barazani and open direct negotiations with his paymaster. The OPEC summit in Algiers in March 1975, and the skillful mediation of President Boumedienne, provided such an opportunity. The pace of events was quick and certainly caught Barazani off guard. The meeting between the Shah and Vice-President Hossein took place on 7 March. The Shah's representatives then met Barazani on 22 March to inform him that he could expect no further support from Iran. Barazani announced that he was surrendering unconditionally on 30 March.⁹

The 1975-79 period marks the nadir of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Not only did the rapprochement between the Shah of Iran and President Hossein of Iraq mean that the two sides were willing and able to crush any resistance with the utmost brutality, but the morale of the Kurds was so low that the question of mounting another revolt never arose. The collapse of Barazani's movement required an appraisal of its causes and an extensive self-criticism, out of which new political forces were to emerge.

⁷ See A.R. Ghassemlou, *Iranian Kurdistan*, London 1976.

⁸ The report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence (The Pike report) was leaked to *Village Voice*. See various issues beginning 23 February 1976.

⁹ For a discussion of the Algiers Agreement see M.H. Malek, 'The Gulf War: The Causes and the Instigators', paper presented to the annual conference of the Royal Institution of International Affairs—Scottish Section, Edinburgh, 7 November 1987.

The Iranian Revolution

Early in 1979 the Kurds in Iran had recovered from the shock and were ready to take full political advantage of the chaos of the Iranian revolution and its aftermath. The internal conditions seemed to be perfect. Not only had the army and the dreaded internal security force SAVAK disintegrated, but also the fierce intra-elite struggle for the consolidation of power provided a breathing space for progressive forces to assert themselves. Increasingly frustrated and disillusioned by the course of the revolution, these forces were diverting their efforts to the peripheries of the newly established Islamic Republic, where the national minority rights of Khuzistani Arabs, Turkomans, Baluchs and Kurds had become a focal point of unrest. Among these national minorities, the Kurds seemed to have some advantages over the rest. The second-largest after the Turks (who were surprisingly sedate at the time), they also had a tradition of fifty years of almost uninterrupted political and armed struggle for autonomy, accompanied by a sizeable militia (Peshmerga). It is not surprising, then, that Kurdistan became a magnetic pole for the Iranian progressive forces, who perceived it as a political centre of expansion of the revolutionary fervour. It seemed to offer the hope of keeping the revolution alive, while exerting pressure on the provisional government of Bazargan, who was showing an alarming tendency towards the right

At least a dozen leftist groups and mini-groups were active in Kurdistan, ranging from the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party to the Peykar and Communist Union (with 'pro-Chinese' tendencies) and Fedayeen (independent Marxist). Of the Kurdish organizations, the two most significant were the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), founded in August 1945 as a non-Marxist left party, and Komala, a relatively new Marxist organization which drew support mainly from young students and professionals. There can be no doubt that in terms of membership and popular base, as well as military muscle, the KDPI, with its veteran leader Abdul Rahman Qassimlou, was far ahead of Komala. While the KDPI and Komala were essentially concerned with mobilizations at regional level, the Fedayeen, commanding massive support among the urban intelligentsia, attempted to create a bridge between the Kurdish struggle and the rest of the country, thus preventing a repetition of the collapse of the Mahabad Republic in which the central government had succeeded in isolating the Kurds and crushing their resistance.²⁰ The special position of Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini, the Sunni leader of the Friday Prayers in Mahabad, is also worth mentioning. Sheikh Ezzedin (Mamusta) was the progressive, non-partisan spiritual leader who had emerged as the spokesman for the Kurdish movement, with a massive personal following.

²⁰ Among other things, the Fedayeen organized a Solidarity Conference in Tehran on 18-20 July 1980. Participants included representatives from: The Cultural Centre of the Iranian Arabs, Co-ordinating Council of the Iranian Kurdistan, KDPI, Turkomans Councils, Society of the Kurds (resident in Tehran), Fedayeen (Kurdish branch), National Democratic Front, Maison Baluch, Democratic Organization of Baluch People. It was the first (and the last) time that such a multinational gathering took place in Iran.

The resurgence of Kurdish nationalism in Iran had started almost immediately after the revolution in March 1979. In April, Sannandaj became the first major town to be taken over by Kurdish rebels, who formed a Provisional Revolutionary Council in May-June. Marivan, Naqadeh, Bukan and Paveh soon followed suit, and by August Saqiz too had joined them. Various rounds of negotiations revealed that the central government would not accept the Kurds' demand for autonomy, and in September Ezzedin Hosseini declared that he could see no use in keeping open dialogue with 'the mullahs who so obviously lack the credibility and competence for running the country'.¹¹ On 4 November 1979, the US Embassy in Tehran was occupied and Prime Minister Bazargan resigned in protest. The hardliners in the government seized the opportunity to step up the pressure on Kurdish and other progressive organizations.

No convincing evidence exists of direct foreign involvement in the Kurdish conflict at this point in time. There are two, rather unreliable and somewhat contradictory, accounts of Soviet and Iraqi support for the KDPI. The first document refers to the discussions held between the US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, and Amir Entezam, Bazargan's personal super-ambassador. In a letter to the US Embassy in Tehran, dated 9 August 1979, Vance quotes Entezam as saying: 'The provisional government of Iran had evidence of Soviet hanky-panky, including placement of eight 50-watt transmitters at various locations in Tehran to broadcast "subversive" material. Ministry of Communication had located them and confiscated all gear. Soviet overflights were a problem. In one case, (the Iranian Government) gave permission for overflight of Mazandaran at 21,000 feet. Plane came in at 4,000 and en route to Persian Gulf dropped at least one large packet to dissident Kurds. Iran has in hand requests for Baluchistan overflights which it has not approved.'¹² The second piece of evidence concerns allegations made by some members of the KDPI, who left the party in May 1980 to join the Tudeh. They maintained that the main cause of the split was that the KDPI leadership had missed valuable opportunities of making peace with the 'progressive' government of Iran and had allied itself with the Baathists in Baghdad.¹³ It seems odd that the Soviets would have been supporting the Kurdish rebels at the same time that the pro-Soviet wing of the KDPI was breaking away from the party.

¹¹ *Kor*, 10 September 1979.

¹² *Documents from the US Espionage Den*, vol. 10, published by students following Imam's Line, Tehran, n.d., p. 77. Given the timing of the publication of this document and the amount of disinformation emanating from Tehran at the time, the validity of Entezam's claim is questionable. The thrust of the government's propaganda campaign was to convince the Iranians that the Kurdish movement was being masterminded by external powers. The left had succeeded in publicizing the Kurdish demand as a just cause and had won the propaganda battle. The allegations were made to prepare public opinion for the forthcoming military operations. For example, we read: 'Entezam said Provisional Government of Iran is now convinced George Habash was in *Kharzistan* three times and has been financing *Arabs* there.' *ibid.*, p. 77. But the Farsi translation of the text (p. 152) reads: 'Entezam said Provisional Government of Iran is now convinced George Habash was in *Kurdistan* three times and has been financing *Kurds* there.'

¹³ *Kor*, 18 June 1980.

Iran-Iraq War: September 1980

Although the Iran-Iraq conflict had been simmering for some time, the naked invasion of Iranian territory by the Iraqi army in September 1980 caught both the Tehran government and its internal opposition by surprise.¹⁴ However, the attack proved a blessing in disguise for the Islamic Republic, fanning national chauvinism, mobilizing its own constituency and even lining up the majority of the left behind it. In this confusing atmosphere, it was not at all clear who was fighting whom and for what reason. The KDPI, now acknowledged by all sides as the dominant political force in Kurdistan, offered to fight alongside the government forces in exchange for a limited degree of autonomy for Kurdistan. The offer was flatly rejected by the government, which by then had hardened its stance and sent out the army and Revolutionary Guards ostensibly to fortify the northern frontier with Iraq, but more importantly to quell the Kurdish resistance. The Baghdad-KDPI axis effectively became operative at this time.

On the Iraqi side of the border the Kurdish nationalist movements were just recovering from the vacuum left by Mulla Mustafa Barazani. No sooner had Barazani left the political scene than the succession battle started. Jalal Talebani by all accounts played the dominant role in forming the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), with the participation of another, much smaller group, the Socialist Movement of Kurdistan. The PUK was initially set up in Syria, and with financial help from the Syrian and Libyan governments moved its headquarters to Kurdistan in September 1977. On the other hand Mahmoud Osman, one of the closest associates of Mulla Mustafa, set up a 'KDP-Preparatory Committee', which merged with a break-away group of the PUK to form the United Socialist Party of Kurdistan. This latter formation then fused with some other mini-groups in 1981 to become the Socialist Party of Kurdistan-Iraq (SPKI).¹⁵ Syria was again instrumental in helping Mahmoud Osman to set up his organization and then to move it to the southern part of Kurdistan.

Meanwhile, Idris and Massoud Barazani had formed 'KDP-Provisional Command' (Quiyadeh Movaqqat) in the northern part of Kurdistan. Relations between the PUK and QM, always less than cordial, became openly hostile after Talebani moved his headquarters to Kurdistan. In the spring of 1978 the PUK and QM came into armed confrontation in the north, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for the PUK. From the very birth of the party, QM had come to forge a close relationship with the post-revolutionary government in Tehran: for example, the Barazanis were given VIP treatment when they were invited to the 'Palestine Day' at Tehran University in June 1979. At Mulla Mustafa's funeral the Iranian army representative in Kurdistan put a wreath on his tomb and delivered an oration praising him as a 'warrior'.¹⁶ Apparently Chamran, then the defence minister, had proposed and

¹⁴ See Malek, op. cit.

¹⁵ See M. V. Bruinessen, 'The Kurds between Iran and Iraq', *Middle East Report* No. 141, July-August 1986, pp. 14-27.

¹⁶ *Kar*, 7 June 1979.

secured Bazargan's approval for \$2 million and six hundred guns to be given to the Barazanis' forces, to engage them against the leftist forces in Kurdistan. In October 1979 Idris visited Khomeini in Qom, where he was promised an additional \$8 million and a thousand guns.¹⁷ At the conference of QM in 1979, the old name, KDP, was retained for the party, which less than a year later formed the National Democratic Front with the SPKI and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). The SPKI and the ICP, unable to bring the PUK and the KDP under the same umbrella, had already formed a separate front with the PUK as a step towards this long-term aim. However, following armed clashes with the PUK in 1983, the front disintegrated and the ICP and SPKI moved closer to the KDP.

On the Iranian side the initial confusion was soon replaced by a firm demarcation between the contending forces. When the intra-elite conflict led to the downfall of Bani-Sadr in June 1981, there were widespread rumours that he had taken refuge in the Kurdish areas controlled by the KDPI. Soon after he fled Iran for Paris, to join forces with Massoud Rajavi of Mujahedin Khalgh in the National Council of Resistance (NCR). Qassimlou was one of the first to declare his support and then join the NCR in November 1981.¹⁸ Although both the (Iranian) Komala and the KDPI had established a good working relationship with the PUK, relations between themselves were less than amicable. Komala had branded the KDPI as a bourgeois party and class enemy, and in turn the KDPI had called Komala 'infantile leftists'. The PUK, though not in direct confrontation with the Islamic Republic, was giving implicit support to the KDPI.

Between November 1981 and April 1983 the KDPI-Mujahedin alliance was the biggest problem for the Islamic Republic of Iran. With centres of activity in Bukan, Mahabad and Piranshahr (north-west of Sannandaj), it was materially supported by the Iraqi regime yet also enjoyed the close cooperation of the PUK, itself at loggerheads with Baghdad. 1983 was to be an important turning point in many respects.

Firstly, in mid April the Iranians embarked on a massive propaganda campaign to bypass the KDPI leadership and win over the support of the Kurdish people. The influential speaker of the Majlis, Hashemi-Rafsanjani, declared that the Islamic Republic was prepared to 'make good all the injustice inflicted on the Kurds in the past'.¹⁹ Simultaneously Tehran mounted a fairly successful large-scale offensive against the KDPI, with substantial help from the KDP, SPKI and ICP. By mid-1984, it had managed not only to push the KDPI out of Iranian territory, but also to penetrate the north-western sector of Iraqi territory at Haj-Omran, near the Turkish border.

The second major event of 1983, not totally unrelated to the first, was the entry of Turkey onto the arena. For some time Turkey had been worried about the development of events in and around its own

¹⁷ *Kar*, 29 October 1979

¹⁸ *Foreign Broadcasting Information Service*, hereafter FBIS, 10 November 1981

¹⁹ *Middle East Economic Digest*, hereafter MEED, 11 May 1983

Kurdish border region. Turkey and Iraq had signed agreements in 1978 and 1980 allowing Turkish troops to penetrate up to 30km into Iraqi territory in hot pursuit of Kurdish Peshmerga. In May-June 1983 Turkey acquired permission from Baghdad to cross the border to capture the 'bandits' who had killed three Turkish policemen. The scale of the operation was massive and disproportionate to the declared objectives. Two elite brigades of commandos and parachute troops assisted a force of thirty thousand men in penetrating up to 20km inside Iraq. There were contradictory accounts of the success of the operation. Turkish and Iraqi officials claimed that 1,500-2,000 'bandits' were captured.²⁰ But more reliable sources indicate that it was a total failure and that Turkish troops had to withdraw without capturing a single Peshmerga.²¹ Apparently all those arrested were ordinary peasants, mostly women and children. The scale of the operation suggests that Ankara had been increasingly worried about the reports circulating from early 1981 of a possible cooperation between Armenian Nationalists and the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK). The assassination campaign by Armenians against Turkish diplomats abroad had recently been stepped up, while the PKK had expanded its activities in Kurdistan, setting up headquarters on the Iraqi side of the border with the consent of the Barazanis in the KDP-controlled region.

The Round of Negotiations

Partly as a direct result of the failure of this 'mopping up' operation and partly because of the Kurdish skirmishes inside Iraqi territory close to the Suleymaniyeh, the Iraqis had to stretch their defences even further. In November 1983 talks started between the Iraqi government and the PUK, with Qassimlou acting as go-between. Parallel negotiations were carried out in a neutral zone in Iraq, between Talebani and President Hossein's representative, and in Paris between the Iraqi Ambassador, Mohammed Sadiq-al-Mashad, and the PUK executive committee members Fuad Kamal and Omar Sheikh Moussa. What had prompted Baghdad to search for a peace settlement was the news that Iran had concentrated some half-a-million men along the border, in preparation for a new offensive, and that its forces, assisted by the KDP Peshmergas, had already penetrated five miles into Iraq in the Hajj Omran area. By December 1983, it seems, a de facto ceasefire had been struck between Talebani and the Baghdad regime, with the former agreeing to lead a 40,000-strong Kurdish army against the Iranian troops in the north-western sector of the front. This 'people's militia', as it was called, was to replace the 'Peshmerga', which had explicitly Kurdish connotations, as a sign of non-sectarianism on the part of the PUK. Talebani had been prompted to this concession because of the news that the Hajj Omran operation had been mounted jointly by the Barazanis' KDP and the dissident Iraqi Shi'ite militants. Although not much love was lost between Talebani and the Barazanis, he found the Shi'ite penetration of Kurdistan especially disturbing. A spokesman for him was quoted as saying: 'We did not sacrifice and

²⁰ *Middle East International*, 10 June 1983

²¹ Bruinessen, op cit, p. 26

fight all these years in order to allow Iran to establish an Islamic Republic in Kurdistan.²²

In exchange Talebani won some very favourable concessions from Baghdad. Agreeing to extensive internal autonomy for the Kurdish region, President Hossein pledged that the Kurdish cultural institutions and publications, suspended since 1975, would be allowed to reopen. Bilingualism—equal status for Arabic and Kurdish—was promised within the autonomous region, as was some degree of financial autonomy. Between 25 and 30 per cent of the country's non-military budget was to be allocated to the local Kurdish legislative council—a sum approximately commensurate with the region's population (all claimed to be Kurds by the PUK). This implicitly conceded the long-standing Kurdish claim on the oil revenue. By January 1984, there were indications that the agreement would lead to a government of national reconciliation. Talebani insisted that such a government should include both the Communists and members of the Islamic fundamentalist al-Dawa Party, but Hossein was not too keen on their participation. Another stumbling block concerned the inclusion of the strategically important region of Kirkuk, the major oil centre of Kurdistan, in the autonomous region. After much negotiation the two sides agreed that a joint administration representing local Arabs, Kurds and Turkomans should take charge of running the city, which was to become a new governorate.

According to PUK sources, a total of six rounds of negotiations took place, with agreements signed by both sides at the end of each round. Early in May 1984, it was announced that the negotiations had broken down because of opposition within the President's ruling Baath party. The sticking point was supposed to be the inclusion of Kirkuk in the autonomous region. But the real reason seems to have been that the Baathist leaders, having run the country on a single-party system for more than a decade, were apprehensive of the potential challenge posed by Kurdish candidates in the national assembly elections scheduled for October 1984. Immediately after the breakdown in negotiations, Talebani approached Syria to renew the support which had been withdrawn as a result of negotiations with Baghdad. Syria had already shifted its support to the KDP, and so for the first time some sort of cooperation between the Barazanis and Talebani seemed possible. Between August and October there were reports that joint KDP-PUK operations in Iraq were pinning down fifty thousand members of the Popular Army, an Iraqi reserve force.²³ This coincided with spectacular attacks launched in August by the PKK, ending a two-year lull in Kurdish guerilla activity in Turkey. Ankara blamed the Barazanis for encouraging the PKK and did not hide its displeasure at the Iranian advance into northern Iraq. Tehran was officially warned that 'any attack on the oil pipeline from the Iraqi oilfields in Kirkuk to Turkey's oil terminal at Yumurtalik on the Mediterranean would constitute an attack on Turkey.'²⁴ The Turkish Foreign

²² *Middle East International*, 13 January 1984.

²³ *New York Times*, 3 October 1984.

²⁴ James M. Dorsey in *Middle East International*, 26 October 1984.

Minister, Vahit Halefoglou, and the Deputy Chief of Staff went to Baghdad to renew the mutual agreement on joint action against Kurdish guerrillas in border areas.²⁵ Once again the idea was to use Turkish troops to hammer the Kurds from the rear against the Iraqi anvil, thereby relieving the military pressure on Baghdad. Apparently the Turks had also approached the Iranian government with a similar proposition for joint operations, which had been flatly turned down.²⁶

Shortly after these developments in Turkey, early in February 1985, President Hossein declared a blanket amnesty for all political opponents of the Baath regime, including army deserters and with specific reference to the Shi'ite fundamentalist movement ad-Dawa. It was the most extensive amnesty ever made by the Iraqi regime. As if to ensure that it would not be taken as a sign of weakness, he simultaneously embarked on a mobilization of troops on a massive scale in Kurdistan. The main purpose of this campaign was to empty the Kurdish villages of their inhabitants, transferring them into closed camps near the borders with Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Baghdad hoped that this would dry up the supply sources of the Kurdish guerrillas. But an unexpected outcome of the deployment of some 160,000 Iraqi troops on the Kurdish front was that when Iran embarked on the 'Dawn 8' offensive in mid-February 1986, on the southern front, the Iraqi port of al-Faw could not be defended and easily fell into Iranian hands. Meanwhile, war had broken out between Komala and the KDPI, further undermining the positions of the only two viable Iranian Kurdish organizations. Military pressure from Tehran was, in any case, virtually eliminating the KDPI from Iranian territory, and there were rumours that Qassimlou had made some rapprochement with the Islamic government. This damaged the credibility of the KDPI, which was walking on a tight-rope and trying to keep a balance between the NCR on the right and Komala on the left. Qassimlou's refusal to renounce all contacts with the Iranian government led to his quitting the NCR, and a dormant hostility between the KDPI and Komala turned into open war.²⁷

All these factors consolidated the position of the Barazanis and the KDP in the north of Kurdistan, especially in the rural areas, and by early 1986 there were clear signs that the PUK's sphere of influence had been limited further to the south. The Barazanis' consolidation of power in the north and control of the supply routes from Iran, Turkey and Syria had also boosted the confidence and activities of the PKK on the Turkish side of the border, which claimed to have killed some 1,500 Turkish soldiers in the 19 months prior to March 1986. In May, Massoud Barazani claimed that Kurds had achieved a major victory around the mountain town of Mangish, near the Turkish border, and had captured 1,500 Iraqi troops and a large amount of equipment.²⁸ He also boasted that his forces were advancing on the communications centre of Dohuk. Baath party official Mohammed Hamza denied

²⁵ *Jerusalem Post*, 25 October 1984.

²⁶ *Washington Post*, 22 October 1984.

²⁷ *Le Monde*, 29 April 1985.

²⁸ *Washington Post*, 23 May 1985.

this, saying that the town had been held for only three days by 'disloyal elements'.²⁹ But the Barazanis' forces did seem confident enough to attack the urban centres and challenge the Iraqi army outside its usual sphere of activity. Previously the tactics of guerrilla warfare had dictated that when the Iraqi army was strong enough to strike deep into Kurdish territory, the Kurds would give ground. But the attack on Mangish, with the help of Iranian irregulars (Passdaran), set up a new pattern that was used extensively in the offensives of 1987 and 1988.

The Final Act

Two new developments on the political front in late 1986 and early 1987 should be mentioned at this point. First, all the Iraqi opposition groups met in Tehran to discuss the future of Iraq in the post-Hossein era and to forge what they would have liked to become an Iraqi government-in-exile. The participants included representatives of the Iraqi Communist Party, the ad-Dawa Party, some disillusioned Baathists and representatives from all major Kurdish groups. Even moderate groups like the New Umma sent a delegation. It seems that both the participants and their Iranian hosts hoped that if such a body was acceptable to the Saudis and other Arab states, they would stop supporting President Hossein's regime.³⁰ Secondly, in July 1987, all the major Iraqi Kurdish parties agreed to set up a united front, thus formalizing a situation which had prevailed for the past eighteen months.

On the war front the Iranians had by now realized that numerical superiority and a seemingly unlimited supply of zealots, eager to become martyrs, would not guarantee an outright victory for the Islamic Republic. The grand 'final offensive' promised by the ayatollahs had become a repetitive joke, which was not even funny, and it was unceremoniously shelved for the indefinite future. Instead a piecemeal, stage-by-stage approach was adopted which implied a shift of emphasis and resources from the southern sector to the Kurdish front. In Kurdistan, the mountainous terrain would reduce the superiority of the well-equipped Iraqi army and strengthen the versatile and highly mobile Revolutionary Guards, thus enabling them to stage a limited war of attrition. Expanding the war into Kurdistan had an additional advantage for Tehran. Whereas the capture of 'Arab land' in the south might win for Baghdad the support of other Arab nations, an erosion of Iraq's territory in the north could give an impression of internal conflict less likely to rouse the fervour of Arab nationalism.³¹ Furthermore, the danger of the imminent dismemberment of Iraq could possibly set up pressure from inside the Iraqi Baath Party to get rid of President Hossein, who was perceived by Iran as the main obstacle to a settlement. Early in January 1988 the

²⁹ *Arab News*, 27 May 1985.

³⁰ *Observer*, 11 January 1987.

³¹ This happened in June 1982 when Iranian troops crossed the international border into Iraq. Yielding to the pressure of public opinion, even President Assad of Syria had to issue a warning to Iran that Syria would not tolerate occupation of the Arab lands.

Iranians announced that the Revolutionary Guards had captured a chain of strategic heights, overlooking the town of Mawut, east of Suleymanieh, and had also crossed the Qala Chulan river.³² The towns of Khormal and Halabja fell into the hands of the Iranian and Kurdish rebels in February and March respectively. The recapturing of the al-Faw Peninsula by Iraqi forces, while an important morale booster for Baghdad, was in part due to this change of emphasis by Tehran. Information released from US satellites reveals that the Iranians had run down their forces in the al-Faw Peninsula some months before, deploying them instead in the northern sector. At this juncture it seemed that so far as the Kurdish politico-military organizations were concerned, the tragic events of Halabja had healed the factional rift between them and brought them closer. This was certainly a major victory for Iran, which could prove to be a great liability for the Kurdish nationalist movement. In a tour of Europe in March 1988, senior leaders of the PUK and KDP travelled together to publicize the formation of a United Kurdish Front. Talebani was at pains to emphasize that such a front should be based in Iraq and 'be seen to be independent of Iran'.³³

Late in May, the Iraqi army mounted some successful attacks on the Iranians inside the Iraqi border, and by early July it had recaptured Sardasht, Zubaidat, Tayeb and Mawut. The severity of this defeat was such that the Iranian government was forced to issue an official statement justifying its retreat.³⁴ Against this background, and given the deteriorating economic conditions of Iran and her diplomatic isolation, Tehran's acceptance of the Security Council's Resolution 598 on 18 July 1988 was not totally unexpected. Almost immediately, the Iraqi government seized the initiative and launched a major offensive in Kurdistan. The number of soldiers deployed was at first estimated to be around 15,000; in early August it went up to 30,000, and by the middle of the month it had reached sixty thousand troops, with air and artillery cover as well as chemical weapons.³⁵ The official ceasefire between the two countries, which became effective on 20 August, gave Hossein a free hand to implement his 'final solution' to the Kurdish problem. The toll of this onslaught was at least 5,000 civilian Kurds killed and a flow of 128,000 Kurdish refugees across the border to Turkey, with an additional 28,500 to Iran.

Conclusion

The Iraqi extermination attack against the civilian population of Halabja has raised questions about the viability of the change of tactics from guerrilla warfare, at which the Kurds are experienced, to regular

³² *Financial Times*, 18 January 1988.

³³ *Guardian*, 12 March 1988.

³⁴ 'As a carefully studied tactic the War Command has decided to withdraw from Halabja Plains and mobilize defence for the most vital part of the country. The government informs the former inhabitants of Halabja currently living in Iran that if they want to return to their town we shall prepare for their return. Alternatively they are welcome to stay in Iran till the fate of the regime in Baghdad is decided' *Kayban*, 13 July 1988.

³⁵ *Middle East International*, 9 September 1988.

urban war. For there will always be the possibility of another Halabja whenever a Kurdish town falls into the hands of rebel forces.³⁶ A popular Kurdish proverb says that 'Kurds have no friends'. At no point in time is this statement more true than now. No country (with the possible exception of Israel) and no international organization is prepared to disturb the delicate Geneva talks between Iraq and Iran by putting the Kurdish question on the agenda. Besides, there is money to be made in the potentially lucrative markets of the two countries once the negotiations are over. Once again it seems that the best the Kurds can hope for is to make friends with the enemies of their enemies. On this account Talebani had two meetings with Hafiz Assad of Syria before disclosing his intention of forming a new 'Kurdish Liberation Army'.³⁷ There are also signs that the Kurds are at last ready to end their endemic factionalism. On the Iranian side of Kurdistan it seems that Qassimlou started some dialogue with the Islamic Republic. No formal evidence as yet exists, but 15 KDPI members, who split from the party after its 8th Congress, issued statements in April giving this rapprochement as the main reason for their departure.³⁸ If this is so, it would bring the KDPI closer to the PUK, KDP and PKK, and there is a possibility that the Kurdish politico-military organizations, for the first time in their recent history, would have a chance of addressing Iraq, Turkey and Iran with one voice. The advantages of this are quite evident: it would prevent futile infighting and reduce the danger of being manipulated and played off against each other by the regional and supra-regional powers. However, there are also potential pitfalls, as it may raise the Kurds' expectations and harden their attitudes in future negotiations.³⁹

The Kurds have little choice but to address their problems realistically and assess their strength vis-à-vis the governments involved. After so many decades of struggle the danger now is to confuse what is desirable with what is politically feasible. Clearly the much romanticized dream of a United Republic of Kurdistan, combining the territories presently shared among the five countries of the region, is not an attainable option and has to be shelved, at least for the time being. The Kurds have a just cause and they will not help it by asking five sovereign states voluntarily to give up substantial chunks of their territories. The military option is also not viable. No matter how war-weary the Iranians and/or Iraqis are, the military muscle of the Kurds, even if united, could not withstand any military onslaught by the central governments. Besides, the fact is that decades of systematic Turkification, Arabization and Persianization have taken their toll

³⁶ *Guardian*, 22 April 1988, David Hirst's extensive coverage of Kurdistan. Talebani in an interview admitted this mistake and declared a return to the traditional method of guerrilla warfare. *Kayhan*, 18 September 1988.

³⁷ *Kayhan*, 6 September 1988.

³⁸ *Kayhan*, 6 April 1988.

³⁹ There were already signs of such a hardening of attitude towards the Iraqi government. David Hirst reports: 'Instead of the traditional, more limited "autonomy", the front will call for "voluntary federation" with Iraq. This, with its implied right to opt for a fully independent Kurdish state, is partly the leadership's concession to its own public, which, through cruel experience, is increasingly hostile to the whole idea of remaining with the Iraqi body politic.' *Guardian*, 22 April 1988.

and changed the character of the Kurdish nation as a whole. It is doubtful whether one can talk any more of a Kurdish nation. The Kurds in Iraq (like those in Iran, Turkey, Syria and the Soviet Union), after decades of separate development and forced assimilation, have acquired the characteristics of the host countries. As such, Kurds in Iraq have as much, if not more, in common with their Arab compatriots as with other Kurds in Turkey or Iran.

The conditions are now very different from those prevailing in the early 1920s, when, in the wake of the disintegration of the Ottoman empire, the establishment of an independent Kurdistan was both politically feasible and desirable for the overall stability of the region. It would be naive to pretend that nothing has happened in the past sixty-five years. On the other hand, it is equally unimaginable that when a settlement is negotiated between the two sides in the Gulf War (as there is no other alternative), the Kurdish question will not be included in the agenda. Perhaps at last something positive will come out of this gruesome conflict and the 'Kurdish Problem' will be resolved once and for all, not only in Iran and Iraq, but also in Turkey. A recognition of the Kurds as a nation, albeit without a country, with sensible cultural and political autonomy, each integrated into federated political systems, would be the key to any just, lasting peace settlement. Otherwise, the historical evidence is there to suggest that these countries cannot simply wish their Kurdish problems away, and the Kurds would remain as yet another destabilizing factor in the region.

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RAYMOND WILLIAMS: THIRD GENERATION

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review

Paul Buhle

Between Bad Times And Better

A familiar question in the Age of Reagan—when would the US Left revive once more?—had become by the last years of his regime the source of deep defeatism or, at least, nagging doubt. So much time had passed since the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement, itself the last, if an especially brilliant, note of 1960s inspiration. The various dreams of extending radicalism into the factories and blue-collar communities had beached on the shoals of layoffs, international market restructuring, and resilient racism. Meanwhile, 'Black Power' and 'Chicano Power' had been, with few exceptions, domesticated into electoral politics. Perhaps Gay Liberation, in both its strengths and weaknesses, spoke to a post-modern sensibility in which no true centre of power or potential dual power could easily be discerned. As with environmentalism, even the best hopes were shrouded with the fear that somehow time was running out. In these circumstances, AIDS looked like the perfect metaphor for the poisonous centre to the witless cheeriness of *Morning in America*. That Ronald Reagan presided happily over various forms of

degradation whose consequences did not seemingly detract from his popularity was bad enough. The inability of the Left to project another vision that even its own faithful, let alone a wide public, could live by was somehow worse.

We've been there before, of course. Nothing could surpass the self-satisfaction America exuded in the prosperous 1920s. An anonymous communist, giving way to pessimism in the distant northern industrial village of Duluth, Minnesota, wrote already in 1920 that he found himself

Homesick for the home that
I have never seen
For the land where I shall look
horizontally
into the eyes of my fellows

Where the obligations of love are
sought for as prized and where
they vary with the moon.

That land is my true country
I am here by some sad cosmic mistake—
And I am homesick.¹

He (or less likely, she) was no great poet, but nonetheless captured the feeling of cataclysmic descent from the radical working-class and bohemian expectations of the 1910s. Widespread hopes for an honest order with liberated self-expression had given way to an America of unrestrained cupidity and a consumer culture epitomized by the advertising triumph of Listerine Mouthwash. In those days, the avant-garde notoriously fled to Europe. Communists effectively crippled their young movement with internal warfare, while oldtime Socialists and Wobblies faded away. The American Federation of Labour, constitutionally incapable of encompassing the industrial worker, satisfied itself with expunging dissident tendencies. Former socialist intellectuals, including some of the brightest and once most left-wing, pronounced this AFL to be the true expression of American working people and its defects the lamentable result of Bolshevism (which, after a hesitation, they had opposed) and of the world war (which they had enthusiastically supported).

A decade later, quite despite the enormous handicap of Stalinism, the Left managed a mighty revival. How was it possible? The simplistic answer would be that capitalism failed. But that fails to account for the human element in the industrial union movement, in theatre, music, film and a dozen other realms. The great change could only have happened because, within the defeats and demoralization of the earlier era, hidden strengths had begun to show themselves to those who looked carefully enough. As indeed they should have. Consider

¹ 'Homesick', reprinted from *The Truth* in 'A Story of American Communism', *Cultural Correspondence* 6-7, Spring 1978, p. 77

for a moment that within the Left and outside—in an America dominated by imperial haughtiness and deeply influenced by the resurgent Ku Klux Klan—an ethnic revival of unprecedented qualities had begun to take place. The 'Yiddish Renaissance' reached its apex on US shores. Nearly every Southern and Eastern European group elaborated its cultural and social institutions, secular and religious. (Even minor groups such as French Canadians, due to play a significant labour role in certain cities, could be found challenging the inevitability of language assimilation.) The Harlem Renaissance, a complex literary-theatrical phenomenon, took place within years of the Garvey Movement's meteoric rise and fall. The sexual revolution gathered momentum as popular culture, from comic strips and joke books to women's magazines, declared an egalitarian inclination in love-making and a new approach to life. Films and radio, however dominated by bourgeois themes, introduced a new kind of literacy to a mass audience. A not especially political corner of the intelligentsia even began to discover the democratic promise of American daily life, while aesthetes and pessimists (and hard-bitten Marxists) piously declared that no such phenomenon existed. Meanwhile, labour progressives within and (mostly) outside the AFL increasingly anticipated a new, albeit unforeseeable, movement for industrial labour.²

Lessons of the 1980s

At some point analogies rightly become suspect. And yet this example may help to show the necessity of looking at the 1980s in the US as a highly contradictory era containing a significant chunk of experiences that may look very different in the light of coming events. That's the essential argument of the third volume of *The Year Left*, entitled *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s*.³ On the face of things—at the current level of Left politics—the claims for prospects or promise seem nearly preposterous. *Reshaping the US Left* thereby takes a forceful step out onto a limb. But it is a necessary step.

One must begin with the project in general. *The Year Left*, originally subtitled 'An American Socialist Yearbook', presented itself in 1986 as an attempt to come to grips with the re-election of Ronald Reagan as 'a kind of symptomatic terminus' in North American political culture. It promised to be 'American' in the broader sense of hemispheric, and 'cultural' in the sense of post-modernism's 'modes of consciousness and forms of cultural production'. This was a bold beginning, especially for a project as dodgy as a yearbook. Many such have been attempted by the US Left; nearly all (like my own collaborative City Lights 'annual', *Free Spirits*, which never made it past a 1982 first volume) have fallen victim to fatal conceptual and sales difficulties in the book market. Left journals, for that matter, have generally thrived only as the product of some political entity—whether formally organized or not—which covered the deficit and guaranteed a steady audience. It is worth remembering that Left theoretical

² I describe some of this in *Marxism in the US*, Verso, London 1987, Chapter v

³ Mike Davis and Michael Sprinker, eds., *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s*, Verso, London 1988

explorations began in the weekend sections of the immigrant Left press, and sustained themselves independently on a widescale basis only during the Socialist Party's years of maximum power. With a few exceptions, they had no luck for the next forty years. The handful of New Left equivalents, launched mostly around 1970, grasped early at a temporarily expanding library list, and have managed to stagger on with the generous assistance of old comrades. Still more journals have appeared amid the theoretical reappraisals of the last few years, but virtually none with so high a profile or so clear a political purpose as *The Year Left*.

YL immediately distinguished itself by an urgent sense of realism in imperial race relations and the prospects of a Left in which minorities would play a central role. As the Communists of the 1920s–30s had placed race at the centre of Marxism's US agenda, and the New Left had sought to go beyond 'Black and White/Unite and Fight' to a deeper appreciation of Black Nationalism and multi-racial culture, so the *Year Left* clearly intended to outstrip the New Left's romanticism and vagueness with precision and a Rainbow agenda. YL's determined feminism was analytically more scattered, no doubt by intent, as if the most difficult questions (such as the intersection of feminism and race) had yet to be formulated. Views of culture likewise seemed somehow vague, a matter of unmarked territory to be explored in a preliminary fashion.

But above all, YL expressed a welcome openness to fresh formulations and to new possibilities for the Americas. I speak for myself as an occasional writer on Liberation Theology, whose irreducible heterodoxy—despite a marked political impact across the Western hemisphere—remains unwelcome in a considerable majority of Old and New Left venues. Carol A. Smith could thus make (in YL 2) an argument rarely heard on the Left, that the failure of Marxists to grasp the religious qualities of the Guatemalan peasantry unnecessarily distanced and conceptually muddled the best intentions of their would-be American supporters.⁴

Only in one regard has YL projected an ideological hangover of the type that I would call the Cult of Correct Ideas. A sort of rage has sometimes marked the treatment of the US Left's own past and present. Communists of the 1930s–40s here looked, oddly, almost exactly as they had to the fieldmarshals of the little Trotskyist battallions—namely, as the single greatest barrier against genuine American Bolshevism and the workers' revolution. More persuasively, America's social democrats—if we count those in the labour bureaucracy and others who in Europe would call themselves 'socialists'—are portrayed as a secondary cause rather than a mere byproduct of massive working-class defeats and Cold War hegemony. But would different, better leaders or a different strategy have been able to overturn

⁴ Carol A. Smith, 'Culture and Community: The Language of Class in Guatemala', in Mike Davis, Manning Marable, Fred Pfeil and Michael Sprinker, eds, *The Year Left 2: Toward a Rainbow Socialism*, Verso, London 1987

capital's political recovery from the challenges of the 1940s and 1960s? The question hangs in the air.⁵

The political problem most often attributed to early YL is something like the opposite of such incipient subjectivism. One occasionally had the sense, as friendly critics observed of Mike Davis's *Prisoners of the American Dream*, that white working people in general appeared to be a lost cause and that if so, we faced a strategic *fait accompli*, at least for further decades of demographic change. But even this formulation, never spelled out, seems to have eased as the volumes have progressed. *The Year Left* has, in short, increasingly served to sharpen its contributors' tools without unnecessarily grinding their own axes in the process.⁶

With *Reshaping the American Left*, the *Year Left* has obviously entered a new phase. It had in previous incarnations only implied that beyond the wreckage of the past and present, a 'Next Left' would one day be aborning. Here, authors speak for the most part as participants in a variety of movements—Central American Support, labour support, environmentalism, feminism and peace—all en route to that Next Left.

A Declaration of Faith

At the centre of the new orientation can be found a political declaration of faith:

It is perhaps the best-kept media secret of the 'decade of the right turn' that the popular left in North America has undergone a genuine renaissance. A new political generation has come of age, with impressive skills and deeply felt commitments through its own experiences, not intimidated by 1960s mythologies or dogmas, keenly aware of feminism, solidarity and ecological issues. At the same time, continuity with older New Left activism has matured in factories, churches and inner-city neighborhoods. Moreover, unlike the 1960s, when the inter-generational relations of the left were fractured and antagonistic, the current North American left is evolving into a more democratic and tolerant community, more socially rooted and heterogeneous. Yet the purpose of this volume is not self-celebration. The post-Reagan period will probably remain dominated by rightward realignments and mobilizations against the Third World... [Yet] the Rainbow coalition and anti-intervention work have brought us back to the threshold of unity and movement-building. (pp. 2-3)

This is surely an extraordinary claim, but not quite an incredible one. It forces us to judge the contents of *The Year Left* 3 not merely on their

⁵ I refer, respectively, to Michael Goldfield, 'Recent Historiography of the Communist Party USA', and Robert Brenner, 'The Paradox of Social Democracy: The American Case', both in Mike Davis, Fred Pfeil and Michael Sprinker, eds., *The Year Left*, 1: *an American Yearbook*, Verso, London 1985.

⁶ Indeed, one of the most important essays in *The Year Left* series to date has been Carlow Munoz Jr.'s 'Chicano Politics: The Current Conjuncture', *The Year Left* 2, which details the obstacles to creating a Chicano Left and suggests that the Latinization of the workforce does not necessarily mean that the restraints of working-class consciousness at large are about to be lifted.

analytical merits but on the perspicacity of their movement journalism. Let's see how they do. Van Gosse's "'The North American front': Central American Solidarity in the Reagan Era", the volume's lead essay, offers the most intimate portrait of a recent political movement that I know of. He has put his finger on a sentiment deep in the culture. Indeed, one could argue that the Solidarity movement, spanning the gap between Marxists and religious activists among others, is the latest incarnation of that spirit realized in Abolitionism's 1840s-50s merger of free blacks, women's rights activists, and German-American artisans.

Anti-imperialism proper goes back, at least, to reformers' opposition to the 1848 invasion of Mexico and, a half-century later, to the rallying of good-hearted intellectuals against the blood-drenched US conquest of the Philippines. Later, Debs-era American socialists (contrary to the charges that Communists levelled against them) generally took strong positions, throwing themselves at considerable risk into an attack upon the 1916 invasion of Mexico. Communists themselves placed anti-imperialism squarely upon the permanent agenda, but (beyond agitation aimed mostly at the faithful) had few major opportunities during the 1920s-30s to make a public issue of US misdeeds. Perhaps their vociferous anti-racism left the greatest impression; its legacy continued into the small but vocal pro-Third World movements of the 1950s and early 1960s. By that time, the New Left had begun to establish a fresh standard, less judgemental of Third World particulars, but also less strategic and more obviously emotional.

Likewise, no other movement today so clearly carries the stamp of the greatest 1960s crusade, the anti-Vietnam War protest. As Gosse prefaces his argument, the US has been unable to re-establish a pre-Vietnam-style hegemony. Given public sentiment, Washington has been forced to fight its imperial battles almost entirely through surrogates—a considerable handicap. But the phrase 'given public sentiment' assumes, for Gosse, what is difficult to demonstrate—that the ceaseless lobbying, local efforts, media events, domestic marches and international brigades have already become a moving force within that public sentiment. The general repugnance to military intervention has been so reinforced in some decisive manner, goes the argument, that we have already 'won' certain important battles. Which is to say: Reagan *didn't* send the troops through a sea of blood into Managua, as most right-wing Republicans and many neo-liberal Democrats in the military-industrial bipartisan tradition so obviously yearned to see. On the other hand, the Cold War consensus obviously remains strong, or so-called 'humanitarian' Contra aid would never pass, nor would vast sums continue to be provided to maintain appearances in what we should call 'Death Squad Democracies' (those with periodical elections and the private execution of troublesome civilian dissidents in between). Things could rapidly get worse. Among other possibilities, the sudden fall of San Salvador would probably impel Bush to send in troops. But who knows? He might hesitate, and that hesitation might buy time for serious change.

'Unbounded Americas'

In short, something very important has happened. But what, exactly? The core of Gosse's argument is that 'solidarity begins in accepting and sharing responsibility, in beginning to learn rather than instruct, in staking out one's own agency as an imperial citizen while imagining unbounded Americas'. This is beautifully put. It could have been said about various (mostly Christian) radicals of the 1920s-30s who placed their political faith less in the class struggle than in their hopes for the non-white world. But these represented a small tendency, scarcely respected by their Marxist allies. Now, their descendants have become for the moment the heart of the Left in many US communities.

Gosse traces, with enormous patience for detail, the historical path of the last dozen years or so. He shows that US activists had to come to grips with their own arrogance in seeking to impose a political agenda upon the refugee nationals of the particular cause. They likewise had to accept a variation of the old Popular Front strategy that 'as the movement's secular wing moved forward on its own power, the most important task was to mobilize America's churches and laity, the one national constituency whose moral basis for opposing intervention could disarm anti-Communism.' He pinpoints the two principal weaknesses which remain characteristic of the support movement: on the one hand, a fanatical localism almost inherently uncoordinated with any national strategy; on the other, a tactical dogmatism (mass mobilization versus civil disobedience versus political lobbying or whatever). And he states his own credo: that anti-interventionism inherently means solidarity with the *revolutionary* subject.

Gosse's essay offers an informational breakthrough and a compelling argument. I am not so sure that Gosse, at the centre of the action, has captured the larger ambience of the local movements, however. Possibly no one could yet manage that kind of generalization. But my own sense of things is more modest. Let me offer just one vignette from the periphery. Not much political activity seems to be going on in a certain ageing, industrial blue-collar locality, beyond the usual low-level environmental lobbying, postcard-writing campaigns on issues touching Congress, and a lonely Friday vigil on Central America ('HONK IF YOU'RE AGAINST US INTERVENTION!') at the Federal Building downtown. We recognize comrades and peace allies mostly by way of bumper-stickers. One weekend a year, all that changes. A Bowl-a-Thon for Sister Cities brings literally hundreds of hidden progressives out of the woodwork. A disk jockey best known for his mordant critique of local boosterism serves as Master of Ceremonies. We meet comrades little seen since the vital Labor Support movement of the late 1970s vanished. And then, after raising some thousands of dollars, we vanish from each other, too—back into the politics of the classroom or of a collapsing labour movement, or public history, or keeping the Left bookstore going, or lobbying, or writing books or articles or letters to the editor—with the hope of something more dramatic on the horizon not too far away.

That has been our truly collective political life for some years now—with a few breaks of mass activity like anti-war mobilizations, the McGovern and Jackson Campaigns. I think of Central America solidarity as our equivalent to the Soviet Russia Relief campaign of the 1920s, which probably mustered locally about the same number (then Jewish and Armenian immigrants, along with surprisingly similar ministers, scattered labour activists and academics), and which also treated its *brigadistas*, those who actually travelled to Russia to help directly, as local heroes. I would like to think that we have helped erect a basis for future movements. But the evidence is not especially strong here, either now or sixty years ago, because the constituency of a mass movement is not only larger but very different from our narrow church.

Here is an alternative hypothesis. The support movement has made a major accomplishment by dramatizing the presence of a larger, deep-seated and recurrently vibrant US isolationism. To this isolationism, and not to identification with the foreign victims of US aggression, can be traced the final and decisive rejection of US military plans for Vietnam. Things have changed since then, but—outside support circles proper—only to a degree. One should not draw the lines of division too closely, or foreclose on the possibility of millions more experiencing a conversion to support politics. But neither should we bear illusions about the likely character of our alliance in any major crisis ahead.

By way of contrast to Gosse's multi-dimensional analysis, John Trinkl's essay on 'Struggles for Disarmament' deals foremost with The Freeze, an event now well past, and the other support movement essays (Barbara Epstein on Non-violent Direct Action, Johanna Brenner on feminist peace tendencies and Margaret Fitzsimmons and Robert Gottlieb on Radical Environmentalism) are on subjects considerably more diffuse. For all these writers, the social protests of the 1980s have divided roughly into grassroots and 'professionalist' components. When the movement is at high tide, the two find congruent tasks to perform. After the high tide, local activists tend to disappear, and the computer takes over, keeping the sentiment alive but in a desensitized and depoliticized context. Left-progressive lobbies can do a lot. But they cannot stimulate mobilization, and their presence may even militate against mobilization.

The Legacy of Essentialism

The grassroots wing also has other contradictions seemingly unique to the 1980s. The collapse of New Left and immediate post-New Left hopes left behind the fruits of 'essentialism', a reduction of complex contradictions to a few fixed and seemingly 'natural' themes. On the feminist side, a gendered argument about women's eternal, peace-seeking character fitted the despairing view of a species plunging to its doom. Or as my mother—born at the turn of the century in a tiny midwestern village—used to say, 'If women ran the world, there would be no war.' The position has a certain logic, but the logic runs aground each time the 'gender gap' disappears on voting day.

unfortunately, it's too simple. Within environmentalism, an analogous essentialism (known as 'Deep Ecology') argues that humankind has been a plague upon the planet, and its best action would be to disappear, if not entirely then from as large a portion as possible. This position, too, butts up against reality. Without vast social transformation, there will in a half-century or less be nothing to save.⁷

But as the authors point out, even dubious positions contribute something important to the self-understanding of the Left. *Earth First!*'s essentialist actions (such as the overnight destruction of machinery) would have appealed intuitively to Jack London and the old Wobblies as the direct way to move against the state. The impulse invigorates by igniting an ecstatic hope for a return of Nature to itself—however mythical this return may be in fact. Feminist essentialism for its part has inspired, among other things, an enormously curious edifice of spiritual self-searching outside and inside the existing denominations. Only those too dogmatic to read American radicalism's deep subtexts will find such an evolution uninteresting.

These developments defy easy tactical integration. The Old Left used to counsel its many Modern Dance buffs to keep their inclinations to themselves; the masses couldn't relate to an organizer who moved like Isadora Duncan. (Ironically, Duncan, like Charlie Chaplin in a larger way, had an enormous following precisely of ordinary people.) The New Left's let-it-all-hang-out attitude made the opposite assumption, that potential revolutionaries either lived within a counter-culture or subconsciously wanted to do so. Organizers at all levels have found, in recent years, the need to satisfy dignified and elderly peaceniks while giving range (to take one example) to the Punk Left's self-expression. The only common rule is to stay away from movement violence as self-destructive—and to hope for the best. Not a very Marxist message.

The second section of the volume threatens, at first glance, to return us to a species of traditionalism. Even the beginning title, 'Dare to Struggle': Lessons from P-9', is daunting. But this is no tired rendition of *Solidarity Forever*. Kim Moody has elsewhere (in his admirable volume, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism*) exhaustively demonstrated the underlying premise.⁸ The AFL-CIO is absolutely and irreversibly outmoded, structurally incapable of providing the leadership required to turn around the overwhelming defeat inflicted in the last quarter-century upon industrial unionism. Even much better leaders could not revamp their internationals to prepare the crusade needed for the organization of the steadily-growing service workforce. The present leaders, with very few exceptions, have no plan at all beyond preparing their own private bunkers of power for the coming day when they have no membership remaining. Something else is necessary, but not yet in sight.

⁷ See also the very sensible discussion of 'Deep Ecology' and its critics—foremost among them, Murray Bookchin—in Brian Tokar, 'Ecological Radicalism: Green Tide', *Zeta Magazine*, 1, December 1988.

⁸ Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism*, Verso, London 1989. As a companion volume to *The Year Left*, Moody's book is especially valuable.

Major struggles, few as they have been in recent years, serve to illuminate these finalities. The P-9 Strike, at a meatpacking plant just outside Minneapolis, Minnesota, rapidly outstripped for observers on all sides the immediate issues at hand. Much beef-processing has been de-unionized in the last decade, for the usual reasons. New companies which fall outside the historic boundaries of unionization undercut the organized facilities, and the United Farm and Commercial Workers reasoned, 'eighties-style', that negotiated wage-cuts would keep the other plants competitive—even those, like the Hormel factory in question, which were in fact recently built and enormously profitable. Generally, locals have bowed to 'chain-of-command' orders from above. In this case, a local workforce with a tradition of militancy (although very little connection with political radicalism for decades) shared its leader's sense that concessions here meant losses for every unionized worker, and doubtless others, too, in the industry.

So they fought back. They first struck, then launched a corporate campaign against Hormel, all the while mobilizing support locally and nationally. Local P-9 became one of those rare phenomena in recent US labour history, a cause which spoke to unionists and others of every age, race and occupational category; and which operated internally, according to all witnesses, with an exemplary democratic élan.

The union's national chiefs, as might be expected of even a rather liberal-minded leadership for these times, came down hard. The local was in effect taken away from its members, and the entire support-movement episode repressed from official labour history. Left organizations, from the Communist Party to the Democratic Socialists of America, generally blessed this decision with silence. The lesson which remains behind for the writers is, nevertheless, extraordinarily positive: they have seen an example of what a union movement *can* be, but has not been for a long, long time.

The Watsonville Strike

'Watsonville: A Mexican Community on Strike', by veteran activist Frank Bardacke, tells another story just as extraordinary in its way. Mostly Mexican women, frozen-food workers resisting the cost-cutting of a shrinking industry, managed an eighteen-month strike without a single crossing of the picket line, and put in a final wildcat against the Teamster leadership as well as management. The secret lies partly in the distinct culture. Spanish is the first language in much of Watsonville, and has been for generations. Another tradition has been abuse of the population by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, known as the *migra*. (By 1985-87, the INS was politically neutralized in its historic role of strikebreaker.) White working-class culture is not a factor, indeed is virtually absent from the town. The small Chicano middle class identifies closely with agricultural workers. In short, we have a classic case of class/national conflict with no opposing middle class or other mitigating factors. But perhaps the special element is best symbolized by the four-block *peregrinación*, a walk on the knees, of twenty-five women and one man to a local Catholic church at the peak of the wildcat. As in the grape strike days, a labour event here is *La Causa*.

And here, unlike P-9's membership, the heterogeneous Left (vaguely Communist or post-Maoist) had deep roots and played a vital role in building publicity and putting forward ideas. The Left's role was larger yet at the General Motors Van Nuys plant in suburban Los Angeles. Author Eric Mann—New Left community organizer of note decades ago—himself played a central role. The task was building community support to keep the last GM factory in Los Angeles open. The company, supported by the UAW nationally, proposed more worker efficiency (the 'team concept') as a different solution. The community campaign expanded beyond the expectations of optimistic local observers. Meanwhile, as the struggle heated up, the assorted Left groups devoted themselves largely to building unity among Chicanos, recent Mexican arrivals and the white working class, on the straightforward issue of the company versus the workers.

Mann draws his most provocative lessons about the Left itself. The competition among the groups for vanguard status seems to him characteristically foolish, in light of the real contours of the struggle. If eclecticism has been considered a cardinal sin in past Leninist movements, it has become a worthy vision in Mann's eyes. The traditions of left-centre unionism, constraining as they have been upon militancy, nevertheless provide 'a reference point of resistance' compared with the current leadership. The half-century-old story of the Flint Sit Down Strike still calls up an epiphany of mobilization. The Catholic Church and liberation theology supply a relative anti-capitalist legitimacy, and the memory of Cesar Chavez's farmworker campaigns against corporate employers demonstrates the efficacy of the boycott. The dissident movements in today's UAW add a sense of solidarity both national and (through Canada's autoworkers, who broke from the UAW's class-collaborationism) international. In the day-to-day reality of the Left, *all* of these traditions and movements make their own contribution. So do the Left groups, despite, not because of, their strategic self-conception.

We can see what might happen from such struggles, in another political context, in the two essays on recent Canadian labour by John R. Calvert and Bryan Palmer. Briefly, Calvert argues that Canadian unionists, including many of their officials, have *chosen* to turn back the tide of concessions by asserting themselves industrially, politically and culturally. Palmer indicates the sharp limits to such militancy in the failure of Canadian union functionaries to carry through on the near-general strike in Vancouver during 1983. These truths are not contradictory; rather they seem a slice out of English more than North American history. Taken at face value, they might be utterly discouraging: why struggle for the modest turnaround Mann describes when at the end of the road lies betrayal once more?

The answer can only be that we don't necessarily see the end of our particular roads here. Unlike our predecessors, we have no confidence that Marxist or Leninist logic will allow us to elude the familiar institutional and political dilemmas; but neither should we have any confidence in capitalism's power to reinforce them forever. What we have learned (and what *The Year Left* volumes explain best) is that the

deep connections of class, racial and cultural politics have an irreducible complexity, but also an astonishing capacity for radical rejuvenation. That would seem to be the wisdom which lies beyond repeated frustrations, a wisdom necessary for the willingness to begin anew.

Race and Labour History

And yet, to me, the final section of the volume, no more than fifty pages or so in length, seems to suggest something very different. The terrain in US labour history, and the central issue, is race. We suddenly plunge into the favourite field of Old Left scholarship, and find ourselves, in the essays of Michael Kazin ('A People Not a Class: Rethinking the Political Language of the Modern US Labor Movement') and David Roediger ('"Labor in White Skin": Race and Working-Class History'), more at odds with the New Left's heirs than anywhere else in the volume. Strange irony!

If the great weakness of the New Left was an inability to see class issues clearly, then the 'New Labour History' was the boldest effort to make up in a scholarly way for a political failure. No district of scholarship has had so high a proportion of erstwhile factory and blue-collar community militants, and of young people continuing to engage in some kind of class-linked outreach. None (until the resurgence of avowedly radical literary-cultural studies in the last few years) so single-mindedly and effectively repudiated the conservative-liberal 'consensus' perspective. None, that is, except the intimate allies of the New Labour History, i.e., Women's History and Black History (also, albeit less spectacularly, Gay, Asian-American and Chicano History).

Our avatars, notably David Montgomery and the late Herbert G. Gutman, set out the guidelines for a detailed examination of the workplace and an appreciation of the cultural baggage that every section of the working class brought to its particular struggles. Their students and a host of others pursued these lines of inquiry with extraordinary vigour, often in the credulous belief that the knowledge acquired would crucially inform the renewal of mass Left activities upon the horizon. Only in the early 1980s did the realization sink in that too much had changed for any simple drawing of present-day political conclusions. The teleology of a sympathetic quasi-Marxist narrative of all US history refused, obviously, to materialize into some grand synthesis. Perhaps the white working-class vote for Ronald Reagan in 1984 detonated a long-delayed implosion of collective self-doubt.

Since then, the chorus of discontent has swelled on all sides. Gutman, who died in 1986, has become a special object of attack, possibly because his passing seemed to mark the end of a phase and because his many critics now took the opportunity they had evidently long awaited. Suddenly, a mentor noted for his devotion to uncovering the human tracks of working people's history (his monograph, *Slavery and the Numbers Game*, had been written pointedly to disprove *Time On the Cross*, a paean to Black upward mobility within slavery, and his collection of essays, *Work, Culture and Society*, to demonstrate the unending creativity of immigrant working-class adaptation) became a misguided

romantic who saw in working people only what he wanted to see. From the Right, Cold War liberal historians attempted to re-seize the moral high ground they lost amid the Vietnam War by puncturing Gutman's purported socialist messianism. From the Left, the complaint came that Gutman had refused to acknowledge the pervasiveness and finality of working-class racism.⁹

Kazin and Roediger seek to draw the broader conclusions. Roediger is severely critical of a labour history which does not place race at the centre of the equation. He follows a notable tradition of W.E.B. DuBois and C.L.R. James in doing so, and he makes his case persuasively. But in seeking out alternative labour history models, he looks, remarkably, to the Popular Front's major contribution to US scholarship, i.e., the vastly prolific Philip S. Foner. Kazin looks elsewhere. 'The truth is,' he says, 'that American workers have seldom been motivated by a class consciousness worthy of the name.' He has a tradition, too, although it is an unacknowledged one: the 'Commons School' of institutional labour historians who dominated the field from the 1920s to the middle 1960s. These worthies had insisted that in America, unlike Europe, socialist (i.e., class-conscious) ideas in the labour movement were a will-o'-the-wisp, since unionism once institutionalized became a consensually-accepted instrument of labour market adjustment.¹⁰

The fault of the Commons School was not, of course, that its observations lacked a certain kernel of truth in the differences between European and Americans. Rather, this perspective (and especially its advocates within the dominant Cold War history circles) foregrounded a willful over-reading of the evidence, overlooking all the drama and violence of class (as well as racial and ethnic) conflict during periods of stress. The hills and valleys were thus levelled out to a vast, almost undifferentiated plain. Unorganized workers did not count for very much at all. Hence one could not explain the particulars that every Marxist had a driving need to learn. The 1877 Railroad strike, Haymarket, Eugene Debs, the IWW, the CIO's early days, and subsequent wildcat strikes—all became exceptional and ultimately unimportant.

Models of the Working Class

The problem of Communist labour history, for its part, was never an inattention to those glorious moments of struggle, or an unwillingness to pursue the racial dimensions. Rather, it palpably lacked *ideas*. In the standard version, Marx and Lenin (and sometimes Trotsky) had never been mistaken, only misunderstood, in their instructive

⁹ See, for example, Michael Kazin, 'Populist Historian', *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 35, 12 May 1988; Alan Brinkley, 'The World of Workers', *The New Republic*, 8 February 1988. *Labour History*, Vol. 29, Summer 1988 is devoted to Gutman, in part a tribute and in part a critical defence of his work by a number of scholars. *Politics, Culture and Society*, 11, Spring 1989 contains a symposium of responses to the controversy around Gutman's treatment of race. I am grateful to Steve Brier for bringing this last item to my attention.

¹⁰ David Brody, 'The Old Labor History and the New', *Labour History*, Vol. 20, Winter 1979, summarizes some of the distinctions, from a perspective not uncritical of Gutman. See also my effort to situate the Commons School in its intellectual context. 'Introduction' to Paul Buhle, ed., *Madison Encounters in Exile*, Philadelphia 1990.

observations of the US class struggle. Workers white and black, perennially misled by their leaders, seemed to have had few specific traits of time and place beyond a certain lamentable social-economic status. If they had a culture, and if this culture in some way shaped or even impinged upon their consciousness and activity, one rarely glimpsed the significance. In a kind of reverse version of the Commons School, Communist historians largely shaped their narratives according to an abstract model of what the working class *should* be and do.

It may be too early for a final judgement upon the 'new labour historians'. But certain features of the scholarship from the early 1970s to the late 1980s have become clear. Credulous and in a real sense nostalgic for moments of class struggle they had never personally experienced, they likewise trapped themselves with the narrowness of their assumptions. Their determined privileging of class, inadvertently at the expense of both race and gender (in equal degrees, it should be noted), reflected an inability to recast the larger picture of modern and not-so-modern history. The tailored monograph, which seemed at first a means to an ultimately political goal, became the end after all.

Yet they had accomplished something real. Concepts of class and class conflict were successfully forced upon the historical profession, and found their way (with a new generation) into myriad districts from museums to monographs—not by chance, simultaneously with the popular culture vogue of these themes in Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the USA* album. This was class seen through the rear-view window, connected with a European immigrant and heavy industry experience disappearing from reality. As nostalgia, it became curiously acceptable, a sort of mental Heritage Park for the postmodern consumer. But even this success, in such a reactionary era, marked a considerable advance over the earlier patriotic bombast of melting-pot classlessness. Perhaps that was all that could be expected without a Left political revival.

The legacy of this scholarship remains very much to be seen. At an intellectual level, there is good reason to believe that the stress upon 'culture' (defined in various ways, from anthropology to folklore to commercial media and mass mannerisms) has helped encourage a long-awaited shift in Black and women's history from tales of heroes and victims to analysis of complex participants in an often vibrant political culture. In a broader sense, their work presaged the literary-influenced reconsideration of the historical narrative. This now comprised not one but several conflicting stories, whose very indeterminateness, as Bakhtin emphasized, suggested openness of possibilities more than incoherence.¹¹

¹¹ I am grateful to Robin D.G. Kelley for a communication on recent trends in African-American history. See, for example, Joe William Trotter, Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945*, Urbana 1985, for a self-conscious expansion upon Gutman and E.P. Thompson. Or the Guttmanesque folklore treatment in Brenda McCallum, 'Songs of Work and Songs of Worship. Sanctifying Black Unionism in the Southern Steel City', *New York Folklore*, Vol. 14, 1988. On changing methodology, see George Lipsitz, 'The Struggle for Hegemony', and Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, 'The New Labor History at the Cultural Crossroads', both in *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, June 1988.

Neither Roediger nor Kazin would presumably be satisfied with such a purely scholarly reading, and rightly so. The time has come, Roediger tells us, to situate histories of class-conscious actions within the parameters of racism. Then we will be able to see both race and class anew. Kazin does not make his own political goals at all clear, but he seems to be suggesting that a refocusing of aims upon a radical republicanism (with small 'r's) can help lead to a better articulation of varied elements in the efforts toward what he calls 'a truly democratic society'.

These arguments should perhaps be seen heuristically, rather than in the polemical form in which they address themselves. Is there, then, a class-conscious republicanism, as many radicals have avowed in the past century? Have we more ways to look at race and class? We know that important sections of the American working class *believed* they were class-conscious, and not insignificant sections believed they had taken advanced positions against racism. Perhaps they were only conscious (for instance) of being Jews in America, or of being deprived of middle-class privileges, or denied some sort of economic democracy. But they certainly thought that every major strike revealed signs of class conflict in their fellow workers. Call them sanguine. Michael Denning, searching for a formula that eluded me in *Marcus in the USA*, might describe their self-understood universalism as 'the class manifestation of the question of culture'.² This formulation, whatever its serviceability, comes close to our own experience around blue-collar life, and how we read the contemporary evidence available to us. Class-conscious in one situation, an individual or group is most un-class-conscious in another; the racism of a fearful home-owner in a fringe neighbourhood may or may not become something very different at work or in sports. (The same applies, needless to say, to often bitter conflicts between black, Asian, Latino and other minority cultures.) Indeed, the available documents concerning P-9 and similar struggles against union bureaucracy underline the ambiguities: support for these seemingly impossible insurgencies has flowed from sources of every description.

The Next Left

This emphasis upon culture has the virtue, at least, of preventing the reduction of the New Left's 1970s-80s scholarly agenda to gender, class and race either/or propositions. It does not necessarily bring us closer to understanding the immediate political uses of our intellectual work. That is the difficulty, finally, of *Reshaping the US Left*. The problems have become clearer, but the solutions hardly less difficult to discern. The future shapes have not yet shown themselves and will not until the next mass struggles help us to test all our guesswork made on partial evidence and our more abstract theoretical interpretations.

Despite all the intellectual effort of the most intellectual generation in US Left history, we often seem to find ourselves back at the starting

² Michael Denning, 'Reviews', *International Labor and Working Class History* 34, Fall 1988.

block. And for a very good historical reason. Marxism, whatever its other virtues, has always possessed the powerful teleological lure of working-class destiny. The obvious limitation of the 1960s radical milieux—student, racial minority, feminist and other—evoked a return to class themes. Twenty years down the road, with the industrial working class in virtual ruin (heroic incidents apart), that return seems somehow empty. But we perceive, at the same time, that without class, the projection of future social movements has a rootless quality. And so the act of discerning the shape of something which has not yet taken shape is an act of imagination above all.

Some will say that the authors and editors of *Reshaping the US Left* have overactive imaginations already. I don't think so. They may have generalized too widely from their own personal experiences—a natural and healthy reaction to the 'objective truths' of old Marxism. They have, to my mind, barely begun to explore the possibilities of a complex mass movement arising in the aftermath of a severe economic dislocation—or in response to the eclipse of the Cold War and the virtual disappearance of the Communist bogey which for so long held so much social protest in check; or again, quite simply at one level, in delayed reaction to the shameful crushing down of the poor and to US neocolonialism's macabre devastation of the planet.

Consider, for a moment, how unbelievable the New Left would have been to our time-traveller from 1955. What will the 'Next Left' look like? I frankly say that I don't know. But I do know that after *Reshaping the US Left*, I am closer to thinking about it clearly. Let the experimentation continue.

review

Carlos M. Vilas

Revolutionary Unevenness in Central America

James Dunkerley's *Power in the Isthmus* ranks together with recent books by Weeks and Bulmer-Thomas as one of the best English-language works on Central America.* He presents a broad, successful and systematic analysis of a huge bibliography, especially of materials published in the region, and aptly combines the regional with the national dimensions, the recurrent with the particular. When one faces a book of seven hundred pages, it is very difficult to concur with all its propositions. But I should say that I am in general agreement with Dunkerley's focus and analysis, apart from some differences in interpretation inevitable among colleagues with different backgrounds and familiarity with the same theme. For example, there are points at which a laudable emphasis on the endogenous leads him to neglect the direct action and moulding power of the exogenous factors (above all, the various types of intervention by the US government). Dunkerley has convincingly dismantled the image of Central America as a defenceless mass, perfectly malleable by such forces as US ambassadors, the Marines, and international bankers. This is indeed more a caricature than an analysis, and Dunkerley fully demonstrates

in a chapter on Honduras that the same is true of the common perception of 'banana republics'. Sometimes, however, one has the impression that the author is throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and the general argument is not always clear with regard to the strategic interests of the USA in the region. This slant is perhaps due to the scant attention paid to the external articulation of Central America to the international system, and to the perceptions of this which exist among policy-makers in Washington. Undoubtedly this aspect is beyond the scope of Dunkerley's excellent study, but it would have helped the reader to understand the concerns of the United States in a region which means very little to it in economic terms, and whose strategic importance is not what it might have been fifty to seventy years ago.

'Third Parties'

The White House has tended to place Central America within a framework of relations with overseas powers that are capable of competing for regional hegemony. During the last century these 'third parties' were first Britain and then Spain; in this century, Germany and since the 1950s the Soviet Union. This indirect approach might be considered as evidence of the expansionist nature of US foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean, a proof of the permanence of the doctrine of 'manifest destiny', or even simply a clumsy excuse to justify intervention (or all three together). But this element could help to explain why many decisions and policies adopted by reformist governments (a degree of democratization of economic resources, union organization, cooperative movements) which no one would consider subversive in other areas of the continent, provoke so many tensions in Central America. The anachronistic character of a good part of the traditionally dominant groups plays an important role in all this. For when they see their rule threatened by a reformist or modernizing initiative, they regularly raise a catastrophist hue-and-cry among US circles that they know to be sensitive on foreign policy matters in the region. In short, the subversiveness of democratic, reformist and modernizing policies depends more than anything else upon the backwardness of the traditional groups, but to a large degree the participation of these groups in the power structure depends upon the anti-subversive, anti-communist sensitivity in Washington.

The apparent immobility of Central American politics in the 1930s and 1940s evidently contrasts with the intense popular agitation, the armed revolutionary organization and the insurrectional outbursts of the 1960s and 1970s. An interesting facet of this is the uneven development of revolutionary processes since the 1960s. There are clear differences, as Dunkerley correctly points out, between Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, on the one hand, and Honduras and Costa Rica on the other. Within the first group, too, each of the three countries is distinctive in a number of significant ways, including in the pattern and efficacy of social recruitment, mobilization, access to political power, and socio-economic transformation.

Political sociology and studies of revolutions have centred more on the factors which make revolutionary processes possible than on those which prevent them from developing. To consider the latter is to accept, if only as a hypothesis, that there is nothing in a society's structure that makes revolutionary processes inevitable—a notion particularly repellent to voluntarist variants of Marxism. Dunkerley's book provides us with elements to explore this general problem in relation to Central America. In what follows, I shall try to deal with two questions: (1) why revolutionary processes involving broad mass participation have developed in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, each with its own characteristics and degree of efficacy; and (2) why they have not developed in Costa Rica and Honduras. Since Dunkerley pays particular attention to political factors and conjunctures, I shall give more emphasis to structural questions. I hope that a discussion of some hypotheses, however brief, might serve to complement Dunkerley's analysis.

First, it is evident that the socio-economic differences between, say, Honduras and Guatemala—as much in what is referred to as their productive structures as in their class structures—are not sufficiently large to account for the existence or not of revolutionary processes. Similarly, the relevant differences between Costa Rica and Nicaragua are of a political and institutional nature more than a matter of the structure of land tenure or income distribution.² From the 1950s the five economies of Central America were seized by a broad and intense process of economic modernization in two major areas: agricultural exports, and industrialization within the framework of the Central American Common Market (CACM). However, this took place within political contexts that varied appreciably from country to country. The 'junction' of these two dimensions helps to explain the development of revolutionary strategies in certain countries and of reformist strategies in others, as well as the specific characteristics of them all.

Modernization of Agro-Exports

Since the 1950s a rapid diversification has developed in the productive and export structure of the region. In part this was due to a range of exogenous factors: the evolution of international prices in the case of cotton; the development of fast-food chains in the United States in the case of cattle-raising; and the cancellation of the US quota of Cuban sugar following the triumphs of the revolution on the island. The production of irrigated rice also began in this period, with large capital investments, but directed primarily towards domestic consumption. This accelerated process of diversification and transformation was conducted mainly by domestic capital; foreign—chiefly US—capital participated through the banking system, supply of inputs and international marketing, more than directly at the production level. The state played an active role through the provision of infrastructure (roads, electricity, communications), bank credit

¹ One of the most outstanding exceptions is Barrington Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Basis of Obedience and Revolt*, New York 1978.

² Cf Dunkerley, ch 5. See also Carlos M. Vilas, *The Sandinista Revolution*, New York 1986, ch 2.

and subsidies for the new items in production, favourable exchange rates, supportive tax policy, and the fostering of mechanization and technological research. Various international organizations, such as the World Bank, and United States government agencies, collaborated with Central American governments in the promotion of this capitalist modernization.

Modernization was not limited to the strictly economic domain. On the contrary, productive differentiation fueled a similarly rapid process of social differentiation in the five countries of the region. New bourgeois groups emerged in the new sectors of activity: partly through a broadening of investment by the traditional groups of landlords and agrarian capitalists, but also through the access of some urban middle-class groups—professionals, public servants—to the new areas of economic dynamism. At the same time, the expanding functions of the state created conditions for a rise in public sector employment and for the growth of the salaried petty bourgeoisie. Furthermore, as a result of the demand for new labour skills, reforms of the educational systems (usually under USAID sponsorship) broadened the employment opportunities and mobility aspirations of the urban middle classes. In the countryside pressures on the peasantry accelerated the trend toward its internal differentiation. The least fortunate—the majority—initiated or speeded up a process of progressive proletarianization; they lost their lands and the possibilities for permanent employment and had to change to different forms of seasonal wage-labour. Others chose to migrate: towards the agricultural frontier, where the most successful were able to settle on virgin lands taken over from the forest; or towards the cities, to join the ranks of the low-income, low-productivity tertiary sector. The development of agro-export, above all of cotton, created a crisis in the traditional model of clientelist relations dominant in the region. Traditional relationships based on reciprocity rapidly disappeared as rent in work, or in kind, gave way to rent for money, and from there to the eviction of the peasants. The impetus towards proletarianization of the workforce destroyed the peasant household. The traditional mechanisms of agrarian society, combining domination with paternalism, disappeared when confronted with the uneven but progressive advance of the market.³

Agro-exports modernization developed further in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador than in Honduras and Costa Rica. For example, in Nicaragua the area devoted to the cultivation of cotton grew five times between 1950 and 1963, and in Guatemala ten times in the same period. In Guatemala the area devoted to sugar cane increased twelve times between 1967 and 1976. Towards the end of the 1960s Nicaragua accounted for almost forty per cent of the region's meat exports. These changes took place to the detriment of traditional food cultivation and, in the case of cattle-raising, at the expense of the rain forest. The competition for land between exports and domestic-consumption agriculture was resolved in favour of the former, and basic foodstuffs—mainly corn and beans—began to be imported. These imports were

³ Cf. Robert Williams, *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America*, University of North Carolina Press, 1986

for the most part channelled through the mechanism of PL480 of the US government, which was thus helped to solve the long-standing problem of farmers' grain surpluses in the Mid West.

The lesser development of agro-exports in Honduras and Costa Rica seems to have been due to various factors. In the case of Honduras, strong specialization in banana production under foreign enclaves, with a sound articulation to the US market, appears to have discouraged moves towards the new dynamic sectors of economic activity. Moreover, the lesser degree of capitalist development meant that fewer capital assets were available for new investments, and the foreign capital flow was very limited. There was nothing resembling the cotton 'boom' of Nicaragua and Guatemala, with its huge impact on pre-existing peasant production. Only cattle-breeding seems to have had a comparable dynamism in regional terms; at the end of the 1970s Honduran exports in this branch represented nineteen per cent of Central American meat exports. In Costa Rica the major factors appear to have been a strong traditional coffee specialization and less favourable ecological and political conditions for the expansion of cotton and sugar cane. (The institutionalized reformism in the Costa Rican political system made it much more difficult to expel settled cultivators in order to turn their lands over to the new crops.) Nevertheless, cattle-raising enjoyed a very strong development at the expense of the rain forest, and from the mid-1960s Costa Rica's beef exports accounted for between 25 and 30 per cent of the regional total.

Organization of production varied, within certain limits, from country to country. In Guatemala and El Salvador, dynamic haciendas joined in a process of rapid modernization involving technological developments, extensive bank loans, and a growth of wage labour. In the contrasting case of Nicaragua, one is struck by the weight of medium-sized production, with a type of well-to-do farmer located above the level of the peasantry, but subordinated to the large land-owners and to commercial, banking and industrial capital. Similarly, the solid vertical integration of rural production, financing, trade and basic industrial processing—which, from the beginning of modernization, was observed in El Salvador, and less so in Guatemala—was practically non-existent in Nicaragua.⁴ In this country, on the contrary, a clear separation developed between agricultural export producers—including a good part of the cotton farmers—and finance, commercial and industrial capital, to which they had to submit to a greater or lesser degree. The relatively close alliance between the state—the Somoza dictatorship—and these 'urban' segments of capital created conditions for these fractions of agricultural producers to enter into conflict with the dictatorship. Following the Sandinista triumph, the presence within the revolutionary alliance of these fractions of the agrarian bourgeoisie found expression in the strategy of *mixed economy* and *national unity*, and in various policies of the revolutionary regime.

⁴ On El Salvador, see Dunkerley, ch. 8; on Nicaragua and Guatemala, Vilas, op. cit., and Eduardo Baumeister, 'The Structure of Nicaraguan Agriculture and the Sandinista Agrarian Reform', in Richard Harris and Carlos M. Vilas, ed., *Nicaragua: A Revolution under Siege*, London 1985, pp. 10–35.

Uneven Proletarianization

There was also unequal development in the proletarianization process, which was most rapid in El Salvador and Guatemala. In El Salvador, possibly as a result of greater demographic pressure on the land, the process was already apparent before the agro-export boom of the 1950s to 1970s. In Costa Rica it was fostered by the strong regional presence, on the Atlantic Coast, of the banana enclaves. In this case there existed a marked contrast between the high levels of labour proletarianization in the enclave, and the much lower indices in coffee production in the central highlands. In Honduras and Nicaragua the existence of an open agricultural frontier (combined, in Honduras, with the *ejido* system of common lands, which made up almost thirty per cent of the cultivatable land until the 1970s) meant that land was also available for the farmers driven from their plots by the new crops.

These processes generated a huge 'semi-proletariat' of landless workers, wage-workers and seasonal and itinerant labourers whose class affiliation has always been controversial. Although extensive in the five countries, the weight of this social fraction is particularly strong in Nicaragua and Guatemala, possibly because of the importance of cotton, which demands heavy yearly quotas of seasonal employment. During the 1950s Guatemala and Nicaragua together accounted for more than 62 per cent of seasonal employment in the cotton harvest; in the 1960s, 70 per cent and in the 1970s, 76 per cent.

This rural semi-proletariat of seasonal wage-labourers and landless peasants constitutes, according to Dunkerley, the force most available for revolutionary mobilization in the region.⁵ His perspective on the agrarian question coincides with that of de Janvry and of the study, little-known outside Central America, by the Dutch demographer Dierckxsens.⁶ I agree with these analyses in the general sense that this semi-proletariat—with its great internal differentiation—is possibly the most volatile sector in agrarian societies subject to rapid and broad socio-economic transformation. But such factors do not seem to me sufficient to determine the specific orientation and content of the political options of these segments of the population. The evidence indicates, on the contrary, that the Central American semi-proletariat has formed part of the base for political options of very diverse content, though all have the common feature of violent collective action.⁷

Industrialization and the Regional Integration Scheme

In the 1960s industrial production underwent a certain expansion within the framework of the recently created Central American

⁵ Dunkerley, esp. ch. 5.

⁶ Alain de Janvry, *The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America*, Baltimore 1981, Wim Dierckxsens, *Política y población*, San José 1981.

⁷ See, on El Salvador, Carlos Samaniego, 'Movimiento campesino o lucha del proletariado rural en El Salvador?', *Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos* 25, January–April 1980, and Carlos Cabarrus, *Génesis de una revolución*, Mexico City 1983. On Central America as a whole, see Carlos M. Vilas, 'Popular Insurgency and Social Revolution in Central America', *Latin American Perspectives* 36, Winter 1988.

Common Market, but its impact has tended to be overstressed by Central American authors, as much in a positive sense as in a negative. A more balanced perspective is found in the studies of Weeks and Bulmer-Thomas, and Dunkerley's book fittingly finds itself in this second perspective. In short, it could be argued that both industrialization and economic integration involved steps towards what the UN's ECLA called 'additive development'⁸—that is to say, the superordination of an industrial sector over an agrarian structure in which it could not, or did not wish to, introduce the kind of important modifications that accompanied industrialization in the capitalist heartlands and, to a lesser degree, the import-substitution industrialization of Mexico and South America. The political weakness of the social groups promoting industrial growth—or the development of such growth, as in El Salvador, from within traditional society itself—meant that the existing power structures retained their position, modernized or not by agro-exports. Thus, from the beginning industrialization rested heavily on foreign investments and financing; tax and credit policies continued to favour agro-export groups.

The combination of agro-export development and industrial growth established a very clear contrast within the export sector: growth of industrial exports among the countries of the region, together with a traditional agrarian export profile towards the rest of the world (United States, Europe, Japan). It is worth pointing out that the traditional commercial relationship (agricultural exports/industrial imports) was now also financing the new industrial sector oriented to the region. The mechanism worked as long as international prices were favourable for Central American agricultural exports, and as long as it was possible to maintain the internal costs of production in the export sector (peasant incomes, rural wages) at a very low level. The strong dependence of manufacturing on imported inputs—explicable in part by the presence of foreign firms—inhibited the domestic processing of primary regional goods and set up additional pressure on the extra-regional balance of payments. The maintenance of high levels of idle capacity, and the incorporation of obsolete technology created a marked necessity for protectionism. Finally, the scarce job-creating capacity generated conditions for reinforcing the transfer of labour to the tertiary sector. This process was particularly giddy in Nicaragua, the Central American country whose rates of urbanization and metropolitanization grew most in this period; it is estimated that by the end of the 1970s almost half of the country's urban EAP belonged to the so-called informal non-productive sector.

The CACM scheme worked for a decade—up to the 1969 war between Honduras and El Salvador—and benefited some countries more than others. Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica, the economies which entered the 1960s with greater relative development, could get more out of the integrationist plan and industrial growth, Honduras and Nicaragua, which entered the new stage with more backward productive structures, derived fewer significant benefits.

⁸ See ECLA, *The Crisis in Central America: Its Origins, Scope and Consequences*, New York 1983.

To sum up, agro-export development and industrialization transformed many aspects of Central American society at the same time that they consolidated others. For three decades the region experienced very high rates of economic growth—even though they were tending to decline towards the end of the period. Differentiation was introduced into the economic structure; coffee and bananas ceased to be synonymous with the regional economy. Dynamism and modernization, however, yielded an unequal distribution of benefits and losses among countries and social classes. The tenancy structure of the land maintained characteristically high levels of concentration—especially in El Salvador and Guatemala—and the distribution of income remained strongly polarized. Poverty levels, already marked at the beginning of the period, became more acute by the end. By 1980 almost 60 per cent of the Central American population as a whole lived at poverty levels (71% in the countryside and 41% in the cities), but a level of 25% in Costa Rica contrasted with almost 62% in Nicaragua (80% in the countryside), 68% in El Salvador (almost 77% in the countryside), 71% in Guatemala (84% in the countryside) and 68% in Honduras (80% in the countryside).

The State and Political Regimes

Capitalist modernization developed within varied political realities: strongly repressive—in fact, counter-insurgent—states in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua; political systems more open to popular pressure and social reforms in Honduras and Costa Rica. Economic modernization contrasted in Guatemala and Nicaragua with the lack of an equivalent process in the political system, and with the inability of modernizing forces in El Salvador to secure a political foothold at the heart of the institutional establishment. In Guatemala, a political framework was constituted by the 1954 counter-revolution and the succession of openly repressive regimes. In Nicaragua there was the Somoza dictatorship. In El Salvador the relative openness of the political system in the 1960s was reversed after the annulment of the 1972 elections. In all three countries the introduction of repressive structures and organizations also had a preventive character—that is to say, it occurred before the effective outbreak of armed revolutionary struggle. It can be understood mainly as a reaction to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and its swift rapprochement with the USSR, and was conducted with the open aid of United States government agencies.⁹ Repression, political fraud, bans, coups d'état, constituted in these three countries the institutional framework of capitalist modernization. The timid reformist attempts in the 1960s in El Salvador and Guatemala, which Dunkerley describes so well, collapsed in the face of military coups, pre-emptive cancellation of elections, or annulment of the results when these favoured the emergent forces.

The closing of the institutional system left those harmed by capitalist modernization without legal recourse to articulate their demands and complaints. This mostly hit workers and peasants, and Indian

⁹ Besides Dunkerley, chs. 6, 8 and 9, see the extremely detailed study by M. McClintock, *The American Connection*, London 1985.

communities, but it also affected the urban middle classes, including elements of the bourgeoisie marginalized by state policies which benefited the groups directly controlling government institutions (the 'disloyal competition' of the Somoza family, or of Guatemalan military dictatorships). Thus, on the one hand, the conditions were created in which an appeal for revolutionary options could find significant popular roots. On the other hand, the imperviousness of the political regime to any initiative for reform and political participation, and later on the very high and generalized levels of repression, marked out possibilities for the building of political alternatives—revolutionary or otherwise—which flew the banner of democracy as the main uniting force. Many revolutionary organizations were forced—or permitted, according to how the facts are considered—to put forward political programmes which addressed the democratic question, and the building of multi-class alliances, with different degrees of centrality. In the same way, the greater or lesser bonding of domestic political power with the policies of the White House determined the scope for anti-imperialist, liberation appeals.

One element which clearly differentiates the revolutionary processes in Guatemala and El Salvador, as opposed to Nicaragua, is the development of mass movements. In the first two cases the progressive advancement of social struggles—workers, urban dwellers, peasants, students, indigenous peoples—stands out throughout the 1960s, in a process which is analysed very well in Dunkerley's book. In greater measure in El Salvador than in Guatemala, this rural and urban mass movement was to serve as a foundation for revolutionary organizations, through alliances and negotiations, and the constitution of popular fronts—and hence for the recognition of differences in focus and perspectives. In Nicaragua, by contrast, the peasant movement was very weak and fundamentally limited to the department of Matagalpa; and the workers' movement, in a society with a small proletariat and high levels of seasonal employment, was also lacking in strength. In fact, several of the most important popular organizations grew directly as part of the FSLN's revolutionary project towards the end of the anti-Somocista struggle: the Farmworkers Association (ATC), the Civil Defence Committees (CDCs, later the Sandinista Defence committees, CDS), the women's association, and others. The first national organization of peasants and farmers dates from 1981—although it had a precedent in the ephemeral *Confederación Nacional Campesina*, founded by the Socialist Party of Nicaragua in the mid-1960s and suppressed without great difficulty by the Somoza regime.²⁰ Among other things, this situation could help to explain the strong dependence and reduced autonomy of the mass organizations vis-à-vis the state following 1979—with the possible exception of UNAG, the organization of peasants and medium-sized rural producers.

²⁰ It is worth noting the lack of reports or analysis of social mobilizations and struggles in Nicaragua prior to the 1970s. An exception, and as far as I know the only source still available on the subject, is Clodomir Santos de Morais, 'Organizaciones de trabajadores agrícolas de Nicaragua', in Santos de Morais et al., *Organizaciones campesinas en América Latina*, Tegucigalpa 1976.

Another difference between Guatemala and El Salvador, on the one hand, and Nicaragua on the other is the articulation of the state and the dominant groups. Throughout the post-war period, the Somoza dynasty was at once a class state and family state, involving a tension between an impersonal, relatively abstract domination and a patrimonial domination—in the Weberian sense. In Guatemala and El Salvador class domination at the level of the state was much more explicit, and military governments took on this basic sense even when, as in Guatemala in the 1970s, the army mounted its own accumulation raids. This in turn helped to give the Salvadorean and Guatemalan revolutionary organizations a much more marked class profile than their counterparts in Nicaragua. For in this latter country, the 'disloyal competition' of the Somozas created conditions in which segments of the traditional agrarian bourgeoisie linked to the Conservative Party could enter into alliance with the FSLN and, later, join the revolutionary government.¹¹

The Specificity of Costa Rica

This pattern of precautionary counter-insurgency following the Cuban Revolution was clearly not followed in Costa Rica and Honduras. In the case of Costa Rica, where political modernization preceded economic modernization, Dunkerley offers a thorough analysis of the 1948 revolution and the establishment of a constitutional democratic and reformist political system on the basis of relatively broad alliances (see esp. pp. 125ff and 595ff). Certainly one could not assert that Costa Rica today is a demilitarized state, but it is undeniable that the dissolution of the army in 1951, at the beginning of capitalist modernization, left the historically dominant classes without their principal and most traditional political instrument. There were, without a doubt, violent responses to popular mobilizations, but these essentially involved direct landowner repression and the state was generally receptive to the demands of those affected by it. The union movement grew within a space of institutional legitimacy; legal political activity could take place with a certain plurality of options (although the Partido Vanguardia Popular, the Costa Rican CP, was subject to restrictions for more than a decade); and there was an effective social security system, albeit with a predominantly urban application.

The specificity of the Costa Rican case also has roots in the pre-1948 period and in the political flexibility of its dominant classes. Domestic control of the traditional agro-export sector (coffee) was already politically and socially consolidated before the 1929 crisis, without significant threats from the Left or from below. To confront this crisis, the state intervened as 'collective capitalist' by enacting a series of regulatory policies, even against the immediate interests of the traditional agro-export bourgeoisie, and by developing a range of new institutions. The resulting situation was in some ways similar to that which

¹¹ It is interesting that the most traditional surnames of Nicaraguan agrarian society can be found in the higher ranks of the Nicaraguan revolutionary government, in the conservative opposition, and even in some layers of counter-revolutionary organizations.

existed at that time in Argentina—only, in Costa Rica, the fact that traditional export-growers were the ruling groups even before the crisis permitted a considerable degree of institutional continuity. In the rest of the region and all over Latin America, except for Mexico, the reach of state interventionism was presented as a class question, with the middle classes and the nascent industrial bourgeoisie pleading for more extensive intervention, and the traditional groups arguing against it. In Costa Rica, however, it appeared as a question internal to the traditional groups and their system of domination, and remained registered as a normal function of the state. When, in the heat of the tensions and mobilizations following World War Two, the middle classes, the labour movement and other forces put forward their own proposals for social reform, a state apparatus had already been built with the technical conditions (and, after 1948, the political conditions) to channel and give institutional expression to many of the demands of the emergent groups.

Honduras, for its part, experienced a lesser degree of economic modernization, in the context of military regimes with a certain reformist performance that is very uncommon in the history of Central America. The expulsion of Salvadorean peasants as a result of the 1969 war increased the availability of land for distribution to landless Honduran peasants without the risk of collision with the holdings of big landowners, at the same time that it created positive expectations—however meagre the outcome—that the state would be sensitive to peasants' demands. The weakness of both the urban union movement and the party system contrasts with the reach and dynamism of the peasants' organizations, whose strength is comparable in Latin America only to that of the peasant movement in Bolivia. The relative openness of the military regimes not only to peasant demands but also to modernizing fractions of the bourgeoisie, together with the existence of material conditions for these demands to be partially satisfied without unduly straining relations with big landowners, help to explain the apparent contradiction between a society marked by extensive poverty and backwardness and the absence of significant revolutionary appeals.

In El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, the capitalist state grew explicitly, in recent history, as an open and systematic apparatus for popular repression, following the *matanza* of 1932 in El Salvador, the 1954 counterrevolution in Guatemala, and the repression of General Sandino's guerrillas in the 1930s in Nicaragua. The legitimacy of the state was internal to the ruling classes—in Nicaragua, not even to the entire ruling class. In Costa Rica, however, the state that emerged from the final compromises of the 1948 revolution admitted institutional room for pressures and demands stemming from subordinate groups and popular organizations. In Honduras military reformism converted the state into an arbitrating force which, notwithstanding its final class affiliation, allowed as one of its constitutive elements a certain concern for the basic demands of popular—mainly rural—organizations.

The New Church

The role of the church (primarily Catholic) in the development of revolutionary tensions in Central America has been a major focus in

the literature in recent years. For his part, Dunkerley pays reduced attention to it. I agree with him, although I do not know whether for the same reasons. Without denying the relevance of the 'new church'—perhaps an unsatisfactory name—tied to liberation theology and Christian base communities, and its contribution to the revolutionary process in the region, I have the impression that the picture of its real involvement and responsibility is often overblown. First, I am firmly convinced that the changed attitude of some sectors of the Central American Catholic church—in contrast with the monolithic conservatism predominant until very recently, and not yet disappeared—expresses, in the proper manner of a church, the transformations experienced in all Latin American societies in the last few decades. These transformations and the general disorder of the living conditions of the people, and of the church itself, have laid the ground for a doctrinal turn to particular internal roots of the church—patristics, for example, and no longer Thomism—and to new methods of, and approaches to, pastoral work open to the contributions of sociology, anthropology and group dynamics.

Secondly, the weight of this 'new church' has been and is extremely uneven—relatively strong in some areas of El Salvador and Guatemala, weak in Nicaragua and Honduras, quite irrelevant in Costa Rica. In the departments of Chalatenango, San Salvador and Morazan in El Salvador, the involvement of priests and laypeople in the gestation of the revolutionary organizations, or in the broadening of their popular base, is undeniable;²² but even the most fervent members would hesitate to assign to the 'new church' a similar importance in the gestation and development of the Sandinista revolution. In the 1970s middle-class Christian youth elements joined the FSLN, especially in Managua, but this was not a massive or determining phenomenon; it was fundamentally due to overtures made by the FSLN and not the reverse, and in general incorporation into the revolutionary struggle developed to the detriment of a Christian affiliation. Thirdly, it can be stated that the political efficacy of the 'new church' has depended in no small measure on its capacity for institutional insertion in the ecclesiastical structure, allowing it to obtain protection from the local hierarchy. El Salvador provides the most obvious illustration of this. The aid given by the archbishop of San Salvador, Mgr Arnulfo Romero—and his predecessor Mgr Chavez—to the new generation of priests and Christian laypeople who worked in his diocese does a great deal to explain the wide space that the 'new church' came to hold in certain regions and its growing confrontation with the political regime. The conservatism of the church hierarchy in the western departments of the country (Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, Sonsonate), where the 1932 rebellion flared up more strongly, could help to explain the absence of the 'new church' in these areas. Similarly, the lack of support from the church hierarchy in Guatemala, and the resulting institutional de-legitimization, compelled the priests of Quiché diocese—the bishop as well—to flee from the government repression to which they were abandoned.

²² On Chalatenango, see Jenny Pierce, *Promised Land*, London 1987; for a general but in-depth analysis see Philip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion*, New York 1984.

This clarified, the impact of the new church message among great segments of the Central American population is undeniable. The conformist legitimating role of the church has been superseded in many places by a role of questioning, by an empowering of the conflict potential existing in society. The development of new theological concepts—such as the idea of *structural sin*, denoting the objective conditions of injustice under the capitalist system; the emphasis placed by some liberation theologians on the revolutionary commitment of men and women as a testimony of their being Christians; the exaltation of the personal experience of Colombian priest and sociologist Camilo Torres—all this has meant that for large sections of the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, the 'new church' is the bridge which allows them to reject the existing order of things and to involve themselves in collective practices of confrontation with the established power.

Revolutionary Situations

A conclusion stemming from the preceding discussion is that revolutionary situations in Central America have been the outcome of a combination of economic and political factors: when transformations in the economy (agro-export, CACM-driven industrialization) and the resulting social tensions (land dispossession, migration, proletarianization, etc.) have taken place in settings of political repression or institutionalized political exclusion, important sectors of the population have been brought, or forced, to reject the impact of those changes upon their lives and to propose other alternatives. In Guatemala the 1954 counter-revolution preceded capitalist modernization, which was pursued within the institutional framework of an extremely repressive state. In El Salvador socio-economic changes were developed up to 1979 through the continuity of a military-oligarchic state, as the new social actors were incapable of refining a political formula to incorporate the labour movement and the peasantry; the repatriation of thousands of Salvadorean peasants expelled from Honduras after the 1969 war, and the building of the huge Cerron Grande dam, increased peasant pressure on the land in Chalatenango, Morazan, Usulután, San Salvador, and produced new evidence of the structural incapacity of the political system to process popular demands in a non-conflictual manner. In Nicaragua, the Somoza dictatorship took over and reoriented capitalist modernization to its own benefit, antagonizing in different ways both the popular classes and the fractions of the bourgeoisie marginalized from state control; the traditional parties maintained a monopoly on legally accepted political activities, reduced to the holding of rigged elections. In all three regimes, there were no political mechanisms through which the basic demands of groups and classes negatively affected by economic and societal changes could be institutionally articulated. This opened up some space for revolutionary alternatives, with an uneven level of efficacy.

In the three countries a close and cumulative relationship developed between urban and rural factors—which Walton locates as a recurrent element in agrarian societies facing rapid transformations.¹³ Broad and deep changes in rural life—peasant eviction and

¹³ John Walton, *Reluctant Rebels. Comparative Studies of Revolution and Underdevelopment*, New York 1984.

proletarianization, new production and labour systems, absenteeism of the new owners of land and capital, impersonality in labour relations—combined with urban transformations: unemployment and underdevelopment, hustling, mass poverty, overcrowding in slums, a keener awareness of increasing social inequalities. Different spaces and modalities of political mobilization and rupture fused together. This was particularly evident in Nicaragua, where towns were the loci of the most striking moments in the anti-Somocista struggle, with the countryside and the mountains mostly forming the rearguard. It was also evident in Guatemala and El Salvador, where urban mass fronts, the union movement, student and other mobilizations were assigned a major role within the strategy of revolutionary organizations.

In Guatemala and El Salvador the dominant bloc was able to keep a high degree of unity and cohesion, notwithstanding the internal tensions and contradictions that stemmed mainly from attempts by the armed forces to operate the state apparatus in order to develop a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the traditional ruling classes. This greater internal cohesion also increased the capacity of the dominant bloc in each country to resist revolutionary advances, and at the same time endowed the political actors with a clearer class affiliation: on one side, workers, peasants, the poor urban petty bourgeoisie, 'the poor and the powerless';¹⁴ on the other, the traditional and the modernizing propertied classes and the authoritarian state as their political expression. 'Intermediate' groups and factions were trapped in the increased class polarization of political struggle. On the other hand, in Nicaragua the exclusivist nature of the state, the growing isolation of the Somoza dictatorship from the entire society, the internal differentiation of the agrarian bourgeoisie, and the explicit strategy of the FSLN generated conditions for the dominant bloc to fall apart and for some of its members to join the anti-Somocista struggle, under the banner of democracy and national sovereignty—the full impact of which would only be appreciated *after* the revolutionary triumph.

The growth of new organizations, which resorted to armed struggle for the seizure of power and the development of broad anti-systemic socio-economic transformations, did not necessarily or immediately pose a threat to the political regime or to the dominant classes, although it did to the aspiration of the state to exercise a direct or indirect monopoly of armed force. Only inasmuch as those organizations succeeded in recruiting and organizing significant sections of the population, and in neutralizing the repressive capacity of the regime, did this become an effective threat. Trapped by the expansion of agro-export capitalism, left without real job alternatives in the cities or the possibility of articulating their demands within the political system, subjected to a 'precautionary' and not over-discriminate repression, fired by a religious discourse which justified rebellion—it is not difficult to understand why major segments of the popular classes in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador accepted, in one way or another, the solutions proposed by the revolutionary organizations. Some for

¹⁴ According to the expressive title of Clive Thomas's recent book on the Caribbean, *The Poor and the Powerless*, New York 1988.

ideological reasons; others simply for lack of alternatives. Some, looking ahead, with an eye to what they might gain; others as a defence mechanism, so as not to end up losing everything.

In Honduras and Costa Rica conflicts and tensions have not been absent from political relations between social classes. As a large number of demands from the workers' movement and, above all, from the peasantry had an eminently defensive character in the face of the advances of agro-export and industrial capitalist modernization, the capacity of the political regime to process them was objectively reduced, insofar as capitalist modernization was a constitutive component of the very nature of the regime. But in both cases the political conditions existed for such demands to be articulated to the internal dynamics of the political regime, more than in confrontation with it.

The narrower scope of economic modernization in Honduras, together with the reformist strategy of the state—especially the military—reduced the room for revolutionary appeals; even though limited, the institutional political system has been accepted by all the collective actors as the legitimate framework for the settlement of conflicts. Undoubtedly objective possibilities existed for this in Honduras: for example, the greater availability of land meant that the timid agrarian reform was less conflictual than, say, in El Salvador. But the person/land ratio, and the existence of a still open agricultural frontier, were not very different in Nicaragua. There, the Somoza regime resorted to the repression of peasant demands and organization, whereas the Honduran colonels looked more for compromise solutions.

Legitimacy is still today greater in Costa Rica, despite the impact of recent economic crisis on the working classes and despite the ever tougher handling of the 'social question' by the state. New institutions and state intervention in economic development and social security; legal recognition of popular organizations, the articulation of the political and social demands of the subaltern classes through the political system, the dissolution of the armed forces, a decent electoral system, enabled peasants and workers to reduce in some way the most dislocative effects of economic modernization. Neither in Costa Rica nor in Honduras was there an absence of violence or repression, but these were most frequently the instruments of private sectors, or of local representatives of the state, rather than a policy of the state as a national institution. Although it is not possible to consider it here, the foregoing discussion poses the question of the democratic challenge to revolutionary strategies. How effective can be the strategy of re-establishing constitutional democracies in Central America—a path encouraged by Washington following the triumph of the Sandinista revolution, but in conjunction with a drive to discredit Sandinism internationally and to neutralize the revolutionary movements in Guatemala and El Salvador?

Twenty-one years ago, Edelberto Torres-Rivas wrote his *Interpretación del desarrollo social centroamericano*, which was to be the most important book on the subject, and is today a classic. This work has still not been published in English. I hope that James Dunkerley's fine book will not experience the same fate with publishers in the Spanish-speaking world.

review

Edward Said

C.L.R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary

For several years I have been introducing students and friends to C.L.R. James's book, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Originally published in 1938, it is a study of the great Haitian slave insurrection that began in 1791 and was directly influenced by the ideas and actions of the French Revolution of 1789. Readers who do not know of the book react with excitement and admiration, and there is for me the special pleasure of watching people make a major discovery, as I made the same discovery some time before. For in this brilliantly written and stirring masterpiece of historical writing—surely among the great books of 20th-century scholarship—one also encounters a genuinely heroic as well as tragic story. Toussaint is portrayed as the other majestic figure produced by the French Revolution (Napoleon is the first), an illiterate slave whose remarkable intellect and capacities for leadership won freedom for his downtrodden people, but whose failure either to take that people into his confidence or realistically to assess the realities of French imperialism brought about his defeat.

James's narrative is moving not only because it is so marvellously written, dramatic anecdotes interwoven with masterly historical analysis of what slavery and abolition were really about, but because it reaffirms the value of the epic struggle for human emancipation and enlightenment. In our post-modern age, expectations about the possibility of massive change for the better have been lowered; local competence and expertise seem to matter more than revolutions, and most people in the West think of the non-European world as primitive, full of uninformed violence and tyranny. To such deflationary impulses, James's work is the perfect antidote: it transforms the Haitian revolution from a provincial and all-but-forgotten episode into an illustration of how, in the phrase from Aimé Césaire that James quotes in the book, 'there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory.'

Who then is C.L.R. James? As Paul Buhle's excellent new biography makes clear, he is a centrally important 20th-century figure, a Trinidadian black whose life as a scholar of history, political activist, cricket player and critic, cultural maverick, restless pilgrim between

the West and its former colonial possessions in Africa and America, is emblematic of modern existence itself.* The son of a schoolteacher father and an unusually well-educated mother, C.L.R. (as he is called) was born in 1901, and very early in life established two of his life-long interests, voracious reading (especially in history and the English classics) and cricket, that most British of games, in which, however, non-British colonials have often excelled. As a player, James the writer was able to see in cricket a metaphor for art and politics, the collective experience providing a focus for group effort and individual performance. Years later, in his scintillating memoir of his life in cricket, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), James devoted some of his finest pages to this theme.

Inevitably, then, he was led to the struggle for Trinidad's independence, and through that quickly entered local politics. As pamphleteer and speaker—two roles he played for fifty years in Britain, the Caribbean and the United States—James compelled attention for his eloquence, meticulously articulated analyses and fabulous memory. When he came to England in 1932, he wrote columns for the *Manchester Guardian* and began his career as a Trotskyist activist, also finding time to begin *The Black Jacobins*, which he first put into dramatic form in 1936 as a play for Paul Robeson. He never accepted Robeson's Stalinist ideas, but despite this the two men remained good friends, alternating the parts of Toussaint and Dessalines (his lieutenant) in James's play.

Buhle discusses James's personal and amorous encounters allusively, perhaps out of tactful respect for his subject's sensibility: James is still alive, and living in the Brixton section of London. But James is clearly a complex, vastly energetic man, whose life sprawls interestingly in many directions. Little is given us about his several marriages, except that they were troubled (and produced one son, whom Buhle scarcely mentions); similarly, after James comes to the United States for fifteen years in 1938, Buhle analyses his complicated political work and positions within the American Trotskyite movement, but refers only tantalizingly to James's association with W.E.B. DuBois, Norman Mailer, Richard Wright, Meyer Schapiro and Ralph Ellison. One would have wanted less about the often arid sectarian disputes James was involved in, and more on his reading and writing, his constantly developing sense of himself and his surprisingly generous range of cultural styles—novelist, cultural critic, teacher, activist.

He was expelled from the United States in 1953, a victim of McCarthyism. During the months of his Ellis Island detention as an undesirable alien, he produced one of his least-known but most powerful works, a study of Melville ('America's Shakespeare and Marx', in *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*). He returned to Britain and quickly plunged into pan-African politics. He was not only close to Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, but also had much to do with the theory and practice of anti-imperialism, in which his friends and disciples included

* Paul Buhle, *C.L.R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary*, Verso, London 1989, £29.95 hbk, £9.95 pbk. This review first appeared in the *Washington Post*, 8 March 1989.

radical editor George Padmore and Guyanese historian-activist Walter Rodney.

Buhle is impressive when he portrays James during his later years as a cultural 'magus' with an unabashed love of great English and European literature. And Buhle shows how this love lifted James above the natural resentment at the 'white' civilization that, as a colonial black, he rightly saw as the cause of so much suffering in the non-white world. Ever the outsider, James never fell into the trap of drawing rigid *final* lines between peoples, or even oppressor and oppressed. As a revolutionary champion of black struggle, he gave in neither to the separatism of the black-power philosophy nor to the nativism of the black-is-beautiful variety, but, as Buhle says, 'moved to place the great achievements of all world culture into a proper relation with each other and with the common human fate. James, and those who followed him, did not need to give up Shakespeare, the ultimate proper dramatist, in order to honour reggae; they recognized that to understand each is to understand the other better.'

No wonder that such a man compels our admiration, and no wonder then that in many ways he is the patron saint of much that is so rich and interesting about modern Caribbean writing. Writers as diverse as George Lamming, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, Eric Williams and Derek Walcott owe a great deal to James's vision, friendship and example. Despite its often telegraphic speed in rushing over James's personal elusiveness, Buhle's path-breaking work—attentive and scrupulous—is a major contribution. At the very least it draws long overdue attention to a prodigiously gifted writer and political philosopher. In fact, however, it does more than just that, which is why it is also a first-rate analysis of James's central achievements.